

WEIGHTY REASONS

For Tender

Conscientious Protestants

To be in

UNION and COMMUNION

With the

Church of England,

And their Fellow-Christians.

(And not now to forsake the Publick Assemblies thereof:) As the only means to prevent the Growth of Popery, and established a Lasting Security of the Peace of the Kingdom.

In several Sermons Preached upon

I Cor. I. 10. *That ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions amongst you, but that ye be perfectly joyned together in the same mind, and in the same judgment.*

And also on

Heb. 10. 25. *Not forsaking the Assembling of our selves together, as the manner of some is.*

By a dutiful Son of the Church of England.

L O N D O N, Printed for Obadiah Blagrove, at the Bear in St. Paul's Church-Yard, over against the Little North-door. 1679.

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1 Cor. 1. 10. That ye all speak the same thing, and that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind, and in the same judgment.

And also on Heb. 10. 25. Not forsaking the assembling of our selves together, as the manner of some is.

By a divine Word of the Church of England.

W. D. W. Printed for O. Neale, at the Sign of the Ship, in St. Pauls Church-Yard, over against the North-door.

THE
OBLIGATION
OF
CONSCIENCE
TO
UNION
AND
COMMUNION
WITH
FELLOW-CHRISTIANS.

I Corin. 1. & 10. part of it.

That ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions amongst you: but that ye be perfectly joyned together in the same mind, and in the same judgement.

IT is a sound and useful observation, that Mr. Baxter makes in his *Cure of Church-Divisions*. There is in many Christians (alas) a strange partiality in their apprehensions of good and evil. Some Duties they dare not omit, and they judge all ungodly that omit them:
B whilest

whilest some other duties, as great as they, are past by and neglected, as if they were no part of Religion: and on the contrary some sins they fear with very great tenderness, when their Teachers can scarce make their Consciences take any notice of others, as great and damnable. The Papist seems so sensible of the good of unity, and the evil of divisions, that he thinks even Tyranny and horrid bloodshed, and an usurpation of an universal Monarchy in the Church, to be not onely lawful, but also necessary for the cure and prevention: In the mean time to make him as sensible of the sinfulness of these unlawful means, and the necessity of a serious, spiritual righteousness, and Christian love and meekness, and forbearance, is a very difficult, almost impossible thing. On the other side, many that are really desirous to be serious and spiritual in Religion, abhorring all hypocritical formality therein, or any usurpation of the Prerogative of Christ, or any persecuting pride or cruelty, are yet strangely senseless; and careless of the good of unity, and the mischiefs of divisions in the Church. Its sad that sacred fire of zeal should be so unequally acted, and dis-

distributed, all let out upon some Duties,
and against some sins, which others as ne-
cessary are as strangely overlookt. It
brings to mind that cutting reprehension
of the Pharisees by our Saviour, (a) *Woe* Lu 11.42.
unto you Pharisees (saith Christ) *for ye*
take Mint, and Rue, and all manner of
Herbs, and pass over judgement, and the
love of God: these ought you to have done,
and not to leave the other undone. Well if
men will submit to the word of God; the
antidote against this strange partiality,
in the matter intanced, of Christian uni-
on and concord, is easily provided; there
being almost innumerable rules and pre-
cepts in the Scriptures to convince us of
it. Amongst which this Text is as full as
any. Now I beseech you Brethren, by the
Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all
speak the same thing, and that there be no
divisions amongst you, but that ye be per-
fectly joyned together in the same mind, and
in the same judgement.

Thus St. Paul wrote with his Brother
Sosthenes to the Church of God, which
was at Corinth, nor wrote he so to them
onely: but (b) *with them to all that in* verse 2.

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every place call upon the name of the Lord
Jesus, both theirs and ours. The words
 then are spoken to us also, and all Belie-
 vers in all places to the Worlds end. Now
 the Apostle intending to condemn many
 vices in these Corinthians, that he might
 not seem to do it out of malice, or spleen,
 or envy, he begins first with a true com-
 mendation of their gifts and vertues, that
 they were enriched in all knowledg, and in
 all utterance, that they came behind others
 in no gift (c). But alas, as knowledge is
 apt to puffe us up, so these Corinthians
 began in their pride to divide themselves
 from each other: so that (d) one cryed, I
 am for Paul, another I am for Apollo, and
 a third I am for Cephas; therefore to make
 way for a sharp reproof hereof, the Apostle
 brings in this grave obtestation in the text.
 Now, *I beseech you* (saith he) though I
 might be bold in Christ to enjoin and
 command, yet for love sake I rather be-
 seech you. *I beseech you, Brethren,* I do it
 in the bowels and affections of a brother:
 Nay, and *by the Name of our Lord Jesus*
Christ, that is, by the power and authori-
 ty of Christ, and for the honour and glo-
 ry of Christ. I Paul so speak as if Christ
 himself did speak unto you. (For, alas,
 how

how the name of God, and how the Doctrine of Christ is blasphemed through your divisions, he that runs may read it) and therefore for h's sake I beseech you. *By the Name of our Lord*, that is by vertue of that commission and authority, I have received from him, who is our Lord, and if he be our Lord, where is his honour: and in *the Name of our Lord Jesus*, he, who is your Saviour, and as you hope for Salvation by him; *our Lord Jesus Christ*, he that is the anoynted of God, anoynted to be our Prophet, Priest and King; every word in the obtestation hath a sufficient weight to awaken us to attend it. What even this exhortation, *I beseech you, Brethren*, by that *Name of our Lord Jesus Christ*, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions amongst you, but that ye perfectly be joyned together in the same mind, and in the same judgement. It is a strange kind of earnestness, and importunity the Apostle useth, as elsewhere, so here, in this matter. He was deeply sensible of the evil of divisions, how they prejudice Gods truth; for whilest they that profess it, cannot agree in it, the Fool is ready to scoff at it, and to say in heart there is no God; and how they endanger the Church

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and weaken it; no engine, that Satan and Anti-christ can use, more than this, the cutting of it into shreds, like the Levites Concubine; the blowing of the Coals of contention in it; yea, how they endanger the souls of men, by separating them from the Church, and so from Christ, who is the head thereof. The Apostle was deeply sensible of the evil of divisions, and therefore is strangely, and more than ordinarily importunate in this Exhortation, ushering it in with manifold obtestations. See Phil. 2. 1, 2, *If there be any consolation in Christ, if any comfort in love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any compassion and mercy, fulfil my joy, that you be like minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.* Ephes. 4. 1, *I the Prisoner of the Lord beseech you that you walk worthy of that vocation wherewith you are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love, endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.* Rom. 16. 17, 18, *Now I beseech you, Brethren, mark them that cause divisions among you, and avoid them, for they serve not our Lord Jesus; But to name no more, this in the Text is full enough, Now I beseech you Brethren, by*
the

the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, &c. that there be no divisions among you.

Which words being apparently an exhortation, must be handled in such method, as best suits with the nature thereof.

1. I must explain and propound it.

2. I must enforce and urge it by explication. I shall lay open the nature and extent of the (*objectum quod*) or duty to which we are exhorted. And then for the enforcing of it, I shall press sundry powerful motives upon your Consciences, to engage you to endeavour to practise it, and lay down wholesome rules and directions, for the better performing it, if the Lord enable me, the time permit, and your christian patience give encouragement.

3. To propound the Exhortation, I need not at all insist upon the words; they are so plain and intelligible in themselves, that being read, they may as easily be understood; and to offer to give any sense of them particularly, one by one, might render them more dark and obscure. Let it suffice to tell you, that the matter of duty in them contained is the unity of the Church, and the concord of Christians.

An universal accord amongst them is to be endeavoured, so far as is possible in judgement, affection and action, this is the sum and substance of the Text.

1. The Exhortation is to an unity in judgement; so the Apostle expressly prescribes it, in the latter words, *that ye be perfectly joyued together in the same mind, and the same judgment.* It is a thing much to be desired, and by all good means to be endeavoured, that (according to our Churches prayer) God would give to all Nations, Unity, Peace, and Concord, but especially that all, that do profess his holy Name, may also agree in the truth of his holy Word, at least, in the main and most substantial truths thereof, and so that they may be perfectly joyued together in the same mind, and in the same judgement. But if this cannot be hoped for and attained in this life; yet,

2. That we must be sure of to endeavour to preserve an unanimity in heart and affection. Desired it must be, but hoped for it cannot be, that in the Church of God there should be no noise of Axes and Hammers; no difference in judgements and conceits. (2) *There must be Heresies,* saith the Apostle, *that they that are approved*

2 Cor. 12.

19.

may

may be made manifest. There must be Heresies, even as we use to say, that that will be must be; his meaning is, there will be Heresies, there is no help for it, the wit of men cannot help it.

The understandings of men are not all of one size and temper, God hath distributed his gifts unto men severally as he pleaseth, and even they that transcend in the same gifts, and have the largelt and clearest understandings, yet *they know but in part, and see through a glasse darkly* and imperfectly, and so are subject to divers errors and misapprehensions. To which narrowness of our faculties, add the consideration of the corruptions that is in our natures, and disposition; by reason of that pride that naturally aboundeth in us, being self-willed and turbulent; for the heart of Man is a sowre piece of clay, woundrous stubborn and churlish, so that the best man is not able to take down his own pride sufficiently: there is more ado with this one Viper, than with all our other corruptions besides; and all those wars and fightings without us, what are they but the scum of this pot that boyles within us, the ebullitions of our lusts that war in our members(f). While there is then cor-

ruptions

f Jam. 4.1.

ruptions in our natures; narrowness in our
faculties; sleepiness in our eyes; difficulty
in our profession; cunning in our enemies;
~~and~~ hard things in the Scriptures,
and an envious man to super-insemi-
nate, there will still be ~~as before~~ *as before* *perpetual*
men that will be differently minded. No
instrument was ever so perfectly in tune, in
which the next hand that touched it did
not amend something, nor is there any
judgement so strong and perspicuous, from
which another will not in some thing find

ground of variance. In

the History of the Anci-

lent Churches we find the

greatest lights in their se-

Several Ages at variance a-

amongst themselves (v):

All our comfort then is

that the time will come

(but we must not look for

it while the World lasteth) when the Son of

Man will cease to be gathered out of his

Kingdoms: *all things that of*

pend on that minister occasion of turn-

...bliss, or contention. Not in a bliss, but in

the mean time fruit profuse? let both

the mean time *juvenile* *crepescere*, let both
grow together until the harvest; the fibers

grow together unto the harvest, must have place sown in the field and not far there

fore

g Irenæus with Victor (Euseb. Hist. lib. 5. cap. 26.) Egyptian with Stephen (L. 7. p. 91.) Jerome with St. Augustine (Aug. Ep. 8. 19.) Basil with Damascius (Basil Ep. 10. and 77. Baron. Annal. 372. 15. 25.) Chrysost. with Epiphanius (Socrumen. l. 8. c. 14, 15.) Cyril with Theodoret (Cyril lib. ad papianum incip. to Hist. lib. 14. cap. 55.) quoted by Dr Reynolds upon Rom. 2. 19.

fore, seeing for the present it cannot be hoped for, there should be such a consonancy and unity of judgement amongst all men; no, not among wise and godly men; but that in many things, and those sometimes of great importance, they may and must dissent one from another unto the worlds end. I say, in this hard necessity, that the first evil cannot be avoided, our wisdom must be to prefer the second, that where there is not perfection, yet there may be peace; good heed must be taken, least by the cunning of Satan, (who is very forward and expert to work upon such advantages) dissention of judgements break not out into dissensions of hearts: lest by different opinions our affections be estranged, and at last quite alienated one from another. It is one thing to dissent from, another thing to be at discord with our brethren. It should be the great care of Christians, instead of desiring to find occasions of cavils to separate from their brethren, saying *I am holier than thou*, by all means, to preserve as much as in them lies, in their several places and stations, the unity of Faith and Love, by which onely we are known to be Christs Disciples. You see the Dis-

ciples

disciples of Christ, when they were waiting for the descent of the Holy Ghost upon them, according to the promise of Christ, they were *discreetly* with one accord in one place. (h) *And as if they were one man, they were of one heart.* (i) The union and accord of heart amongst Christians, is the best disposition that can be to prepare them, to receive the Spirit of Christ; yea, and is the best token and sign that they have received it. Indeed this is the new Commandment the fulfilling of the Royal Law. It is Christ's Commandment, this is my Commandment, *that you love one another*: not but that the rest are his Commandments too, but this is peculiarly, declared by his mouth, written in his blood, *Walk in love as Christ hath loved you* (k). But this love cannot consist with those divisions and separations which some men make from their brethren, not so much out of love to truth, as out of hatred and contempt of their persons. That's the second thing to which the Apostle exhorts in the Text, in this *speaking the same things, and being of the same mind and judgement, and that there be no divisions amongst us*: It requires in case of different judgments, unanimity in heart and affections.

3. There

2. There is a third thing in the Exhortation, even uniformity in actions, this seems to be properly in the very letter of the Text, *that you all speak the same things*, for that we may do so, three things seem essentially necessary thereunto.

1. That you all submit to the same Government. For there is a necessity of Government to prevent confusion: of one Government both in Church and State to prevent division. Where there is an Anarchy or no Government, confusion must needs follow among the members. As it was in Israel: *When there was no King in Israel every man did that which was right in his own eyes* (1): and where there are in 1 Judg. 17.6 one body diverse Governments, division must needs follow among the members, as it was in Israel, when Jeroboam set up a faction against the House of David*, *for the transgressions*, and consequently for the punishments thereof, *many are the Princes thereof* (2). * 1 Kin. 12.2 Indeed we in this Nation need not n Pro. 28.2. be told the miseries of no Government, or of many Governments, or many Governors, our own experience will sure, for one Age make us dread it, and inexcusable fools, if we desire it. We have all the reason then in the World to obey the Apostles precepts

1 Pet. 2. 13

cepts of submitting to them, that of right are set over us: and being subject to every Ordinance of Man, for our own as well as for the Lord's sake (o). And whoever speaks otherwise, inciting men to cast off this yoke from their necks: they are properly stiled children of *Belial*, their hellish design is clean contrary to the Text, to cause divisions and offences amongst you.

As it is necessary to prevent divisions that you submit to the same Government so that you walk by the same rule; What is that? It is either Principal or Subordinate. Principal, even the Law and the Testimony, the sacred Scriptures: Subordinate, even according to the Scriptures, the rules, and canons, and Customes of the Church, without a due respect to both these rules in their right places, it is impossible Christians should speak all the same things, but there will be divisions among them. I dare assert, and think it not difficult to maintain by the Scriptures, as well as clear reason, that there is an obligation upon the members of that Church in which they were born, baptised and bred up, to submit unto, and obey the rules, and canons, and customes thereof,

thereof, if they be not able to prove them contrary to the Scriptures, or the clear light of natural reason in us, or at least such conclusions as are properly, directly, and evidently deduced from them. There is much in that argument of the Apostles to confirm the sober-minded herein. (p) *If any man be contentious, we have no such custome, neither the Churches of God.* And in that of our Saviour: *If the Offender will not hear the Church, let him be to thee as an Heathen and a Publican;* and again, *He that heareth you, heareth me, and he that despiseth you, despiseth me, and he that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me.* Do not think I ascribe to the Church any Popish infallibility, or call for any blind obedience unto it. O no; if any of its rules or injunctions, appears to be contrary to the Word of God, like Nebuchadnezzar's to the three Children, to fall down to his Image; or Darius his to Daniel, not to pray to any other God; or the High-Priests to the Apostles, not to speak in the name of Jesus, then must we answer with them: *whether must we obey God or man, judge ye.* But then we must not deny our obedience to such Church rules and canons, as repugnant to God's Word upon light surmises,

and

q Jude 10.
r As I take
it, this is
the excel-
lent Bishop
Sanderion
in one of his
Sermons,
No worle
for that.

and slender presumptions; this were to
speak evil of the things we know not (q).
Ond; (r) as in the Courts of Civil Justice,
men are not ordinarily put to prove them-
selves honest men, but the proof lieth on
their accusers part, and therefore it is suf-
ficient for the acquitting any man. *in foro*
externo, that there is nothing of moment
proved against him; it being requisite to
the condemning a man that there be a clear
and a full evidence against him. So in these
moral trials, when enquiry is made into
the lawfulness or sinfulness of our Church-
es rules and customes, and our Govern-
ours commands, it is sufficient to warrant
them, if there can be nothing produced
from expresse Scriptures or sound reason
against them; and to condemn or disobey
them upon remote consequences and weak
deductions; though it be from Scripture-
Texts, can ne'r be excused of rashness
and unrighteousness. Sure obedience is an
unquestioned duty, *obey them that have the*
rule over you (saith the Apostle) for they
watch for your Souls, and therefore un-
less it be manifest, that their Lawes and
injunctions be against the Word of God,
all our questions are but carpings, and
needless stumbling blocks, laid in our way
by

By the Troublers of *Israel*. The safest way is obedience, which also is absolutely necessary among Christians, that they may speak the same things, and that there be no divisions among them. Then,

3. More particularly still to this end, that as Christian Brethren ye may speak the same things without divisions, it is necessary that ye all joyn in the same form of prayer, praise, and manner of worshipping God. It was *David's* earnest desire, *O magnifie the Lord with me, and let us exalt his Name together.* And the Holy Ghost in the *Acts* mentions this Uniformity in the Churches Infaney, and time of her first love, to be one chief cause of its prospering and enlarging, *Acts* 4. 24. The multitude of Believers lifted up their voice in praises with one accord. *The people with one accord gave heed to the things that Philip spake.* And it is a great part of the Blessedness of the heavenly *Jerusalem*, that the Elders sing with one voice unto the Lord. So doth the Apostle make it his earnest prayer for the *Romans*, that they might be like-minded one towards another, that with one mind, and with one voice, they might glorifie God the Father of our Lord *Jesus Christ*: with

Psal. 34. 3.

Acts 4. 24.

Acts 8. 5.

Rev. 4. 10.

Rom. 15. 6.

one mind, and with one mouth too; while men think to glorifie God in several ways, and several forms, it is scarce intelligible, how they can do it in this desirable manner, with one mind, and with one mouth; so many several ways, so many several mouths; and that can never tend to the glory of God. The Apostles expression intimates, that like-mindedness, unanimity, and uniformity, are very subservient to the glory of God. What an honour is it to the God of Israel, when all Israel came in as one man to do him worship; when that admirable variety of Gifts and Administrations and Offices that are in his Church do not jar and clash one against another; but sustain and mutually supply out of their stores the wants each of other, and all conspire together in their several kinds to glorifie God. What else is musical harmony but concord in discourse, variety in consort? it makes the musick full and delightful, when there is a well-ordered variety of voices and instruments in it; but if all instruments were perfectly well tuned, yet if the men could not agree what to play, but one would have a nimble Galliard, another a frisking Jig, another a grave
 Air;

Air; and if all of them should be so wilful, as without yielding to the rest, to scrape on his Tune as loud as he could, what a hideous hateful noise may you imagine would such a mess of Musick be? no less odious to God, and equally grievous to every godly man it is, when such Vices as these are heard in the Church of God, *I am of Paul, and I of Cephas, and I of Apollo:* When one Pamphleteer will have the Church governed after this fashion, another after that; when one Mountebank in Religion will have this way of Worship, and form of Prayer, another that, to the great scandal of the Reformed Religion, and the manifest dishonour of God. Surely beloved, such an Uniformity, as of all Christian Members of the same Church to be of one mind, and worship God in one place, and in one way, and form, and manner, with one accord, would be the most beautiful, and comely, and happiest thing in the world. So is this Uniformity in actions of Worship also necessarily included in this Apostolical Exhortation, to speak the same things, and that there be no divisions amongst us.

Indeed this would be a perfect and blessed

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fed Unity for all these three to meet together; unity in judgment, unanimity of loving affection, and uniformity in action; and this perfection ought to be both in all our aims and endeavours: but if while we faithfully endeavour it in our several places, we cannot (through our own weakness, or others waywardness) attain to the full perfection hereof, yet *pulchrum erit in secundis tertiis* we, it will be our comfort and commendation to labour and attain so much after it as possibly we can; and therefore *nevertheless whereunto we have attained, let us mind the same things*: Let us labour after this unity of judgment, affection, and action. I beseech you Brethren by the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions amongst you, but that ye strive perfectly to be joyned together in the same mind, and in the same judgment.

Phil 3.16.

To quicken you hereunto (this being so needful a duty, and we all so dull unto it) let me offer these following forceable Motives to your serious consideration.

1. The seasonableness of the Exhortation: for are not these the last and worst days, the dregs and Lees of times, of which

which our Saviour prophesied, when Christian Love should grow cold, which is the Bond of Peace; and Satan knowing his time but short, should double his diligence in sowing his Tares of cursed contentions in Gods Fold, the proud and malicious hearts of men being too fruitful soils thereof; and of which the Apostle prophesieth, and Saint Jude. Read the places, and see if the men of this Age be not therein exactly described. Alas, when was the Christian World ever more out of quiet? when was Gods Church ever more dangerously rent and torn? when was Schismes and Separations ever more greedily and dangerously made and prosecuted? when was Gods Church on Earth more Militant, or had more Enemies? forreign, abroad, intestine, at home? more Satanical spirits to hate it? more *Lucians* to scoff at it? more *Rabshakehs* to rail on it? or *Balaams* to curse it? when were there more Atheists to scoff at Religion, (*Ridemur decathimmur*, saith *Tert.*) more Hereticks to reproach, revile, and slander it? more Schismaticks studying divisions, affecting parties, carrying up-sides and factions, (and being out of danger of the Kings Laws, and

Heb. 10.
24, 25.
ude v. 11.

contemning the Churches pious Edicts and Censures) like unnatural Children rending and tearing their Mothers Bowels? (*Inimici Domestici.*) Behold the Churches Foes are those of her own Family, her Sons disturb her peace, and the way thereof they will not know. *Rom. 3. 17.* Mistake me not, my design is not to rail, or reflect on any sort of men, but only to warn you as a faithful Watchman to take heed of these deceitful ways: and the very design of this Complaint and Lamentation, that there should be such Troublers of *Israel* abounding amongst us, is only to shew the Exhortation in the Text as necessary; so seasonable, even that we all hearken after the things that make for peace: to speak the same things, and to avoid (if it be possible) these divisions amongst us. So from the seasonableness, pass we

2. To the reasonableness of the Exhortation also, and that in almost infinite respects.

1. Listen to Gods Commands; search the Scriptures Brethren, and find any duty, if you can, more peremptorily commanded, more highly commended by the Holy Ghost, more frequently pressed by the
the

the Prophets and Apostles than this. How often doth the Gospel of Peace call upon us, to follow peace with all men, if it be possible, and as much as lyeth in us to live peaceably with all men? How much more with Brethren, men of the same Nation, and Church, and Faith, and Religion with our selves? for to such it is written, Be of one mind, live in peace, follow Righteousness, Faith, Charity, and Peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart. It were endless to give you all the strict Commands of the Gospel to this purpose, without obedience to which we are not real but nominal servants of Jesus Christ, unless we study Unity, and be careful to maintain peace and love, and speak the same things, and avoid divisions, and those that cause them, the World may question our Christianity; which will further appear in all the following considerations: whilst we look upon God, whom we pretend to serve and worship.

Eph. 5. 16.

Heb. 12. 14

2 Cor. 13. 11.

2 Cor. 13. 14.

2 Tim. 2. 23.

It is the Apostles Argument amongst many others: *I the Prisoner of the Lord beseech you, that you walk worthy of the Calling wherewith ye are called. How? With all lowliness, and meekness, and long-*

Eph. 4. 1, 2.

suffering, endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace: For, saith he, there is one Body, one Spirit, one Hope, one Lord, one God, and Father of all. There is but one God, and great reason then we should endeavour unity, and unanimity, and uniformity in the worship and service of this one God. Those that have several Gods, may well have several ways, and several forms to worship them; as the Marriners in *Jonah* called every one upon his God. When several Gods are afoot, all Games must go forward; but now we all profess but one God, unchangeably one, the Maker of Heaven and Earth, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and he is always of one mind, he is not for one thing sometimes, and another thing other times, like a distempered Stomack, but God is still of one and the same mind; and therefore that which pleaseth him at one time, the same words and things, if they proceed from the same heart, must needs find the same acceptance always. No marvel if dissentions arise amongst wicked ones, betwixt *Abimelech* and the men of *Shechem*, seeing they serve divers Masters, have several lusts, one reigning in this, another in that man, all commanding

manding contrary things ; but shall not Christians speak the same things without divisions, that all serve one Lord, and that one being so far from commanding any thing that may occasion discord, that his very living is the Badge and Cognizance of Love and Peace. More particularly, being we profess to worship the Trinity in Unity, and Unity in Trinity, let us consider each Person in the Blessed Trinity.

1. God the Father he is one, there is one Father of all : If God be our Father, Eph. 4. 6.

then are we all Brethren to each other. If a man coming into his Neighbours house by chance, should find them all together by the ears, would he not think them disorderly and ill-governed children? how much more if they should be observed to be ever and anon snarling and quarrelling one with another, and beating and kicking one another. Here *Joseph* thought he need say no more to his Brethren to prevent their falling out by the way, than to remind them that they were all one mans Children, and Brethren to each other : And *Abraham* to

Gen. 45. 24

procure an everlasting Amity, and utter cessation of all Debates, thenceforth between himself, and his Nephew *Lot*, and their

Gen. 13. 8.
Psa. 133. 1.

Gen. 27. 4.

their Servants, made use of this one Argument, the most prevalent of all others, that they were Brethren. *Ecce quam bonum*; Behold how good and joyful a thing it is Brethren to dwell together in unity. Prophane *Esau* durst not avenge himself on *Jacob*, lest he should vex his Father *Isaac*: And shall not Christians then who are Brethren, not only by Generation, but by Regeneration, much more tender the displeasing of their one Father, by disagreements and molestations of one another? the nearer, the dearer, we use to say, and there are few Relations nearer than that of Brotherhood, but no Brotherhood in the world so closely and surely knit together, and with so many and strong ties, as the Fraternity of Christians in the Communion of Saints, which is the Brotherhood in the Text: And therefore as we are Brethren, and tender the glory of that God who is the Father of us all, it concerns us to speak the same things, and that there be no divisions amongst us.

2. Consider also God the Son; we are all redeemed by that one price of his precious Blood, and methinks that calls for love and unity. It's implied in that of
the

the Apostle, *One Faith*: One Faith is Eph 4.3.
fixed on one and the same object, the
Mercy of God, and Merits of Christ, or
Gods Free Grace in Christ, and being in-
grafted into one and the same Vine,
should we not all bear one and the same
fruit? We are all Fellow-Captives re-
deemed by the same Saviour, Fellow-Pa-
tients cured by the same Physician, even
Jesus Christ the object of our Faith.
Hence he that redeemed us did in like
manner pray for us, that we may be one, John 17.
perfectly one, that the world might know 21,23.
that God sent him: but this can never
be, if we speak not the same things, but
there be divisions amongst us,

3. There is also but one Spirit, and
that's the Apostles Argument also: *There*
is one Body, one Spirit; and therefore en- Eph.4.
deavour the unity of the Spirit. The Spi-
rit is a Spirit of Unity: this Spirit is the
very Essential Unity, Love and Love-knot
of the two Persons, the Father and the
Son, of God with God; yea, it was the
very Union and Love-knot of the two
Natures in Christ, of God and Man: he
is the Spirit of Unity, and therefore can-
not delight in us, unless we keep the uni-
ty of the Spirit: That Spirit, the Soul of
man,

Ezek. 35.
7, 8, 9.

Judges 9.

man, that gives life to the natural body, yet can it not animate and give life to members dismembred, unless they be first united and compact together. We read there of the dead and scattered bones, that to the end they might be revived, they first came together, every bone to his bone, then the sinews came and knit them, then the flesh and skin covered them; and then, and not before, the Spirit came from the four Winds to give them life. So the very natural Spirit, the Soul, doth not inform the body, unless there be an accord and unity in it: much more is this required as a proper disposition to make us meet for the habitation of the Holy Ghost, even this quality that is like that his Nature and Essence, Unity and Unanimity, for us to be of one mind and judgment, and to speak the same things, and that there be no divisions amongst us: divisions are a token we are led by divers Spirits, and not by this one. There is a Spirit indeed in these divisions, but it is an evil spirit, such as was between *Abimelech* and the men of *Shechem*: And such as are for a toleration of such divisions, we may write upon them as our Saviour did upon the man possessed, *Legion*,

gion, for they are many: pretend they to the Spirit as they will, of walking and praying by the Spirit, we need not believe them, unless we list, to be led by any other than a devillish spirit. The Devil shews himself to be a Devil by his Cloven Foot: if we would receive, and not grieve, nor quench, nor dishonour the one Spirit, by which we pretend all to be governed, let us speak the same things, that there be no divisions amongst us: As we tender the glory of God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, we must do this.

3. So while we look upon the Church of God, for that is but one body, which is the Apostles argument also: *It is but one, and only one. My Love, my Dove, my undefiled is one, she is the only one of her Mother.* So are we Christians made all up into *ἐκκλησία*, one mystical body; and that by such a real (though mysterious) incorporation, as that we become thereby *ἑαυτοὶ*, as all of us members of Christ, so every one of us members one of another: Nor the sympathy and supply that is between the members of the natural body, for their mutual comfort and good of the whole: The Apostle setteth it forth

1 Cor. 12.

forth elegantly; and applieth it very fully to the Mystical Body of the Church at large. It were a thing prodigiously unnatural, and to every mans apprehension the effect of a frenzy or madness at the least, to see the head plot against, the tongue revile, the hands buffet, the teeth devour his fellow-members. No, if any one member, be it never so small and despicable, be in anguish, the rest are sensible of it: There is a mutual sympathy and communication betwixt them; there are no terms of bitterness stood upon in the natural members, I am better than thou, and I than thou; no terms of disgrace heard, (I have no need of thee, nor I of thee) but they are all ready to contribute their several supplies according to their several measures and abilities, to give ease and relief to the grieved part, *ἵνα μὴ ἦ σχίσμα.*

1 Cor. 12.

25.

That there be no rent or schism, saith the Apostle, using the very word of the Text, no division or disunion of parts in the body: And as we may consider the Church as one Body, so as one Household, and our selves as fellow-servants of the same Family, the same household of Faith: So ought we then to behave our selves in the House of God, which is the Church of

Gal. 6. 10.

1 Tim. 3.

15.

the

the Living God, as becometh fellow-servants that live under the same Master: We all wear one Livery, having all put on Christ by solemn profession at our holy Baptism; and we are all fed at one Table, eating the same spiritual meat, and drinking the same spiritual drink in the holy Communion; and therefore all reason, that as members of the same Body, and servants of the same Family, we speak the same things, and there be no divisions amongst us. Mr. Baxter in his *Care of Divisions*, urgeth two or three things well in this Topick of the Church, as that our union with the Church, is a sign of our proportionable union with Christ; and our separation from the Church, is a sign of our separation from Christ; nay, that union is not only an accident, but of the very Essence of the Church, without which it is no Church, and without which we can be no members of it, Unity being necessary to the very being of the Church, and of Christianity; and that our union is necessary to our nourishment from, and Communion with Christ and his Church: but I refer you for these to him, whom perhaps some will rather hear than us, if we should speak the same words. I shall amongst

1 Cor. 10.
3. 4.

See it page
66.

amongst many particulars urge only four things, with reference to the Church, that shews the need you have to speak the same things, and that there be no divisions amongst you.

But. This is the only way to forward the work of God for the building up of the Church; which Faction and divisions on the other hand obstructeth, so as nothing more. You often read in Scripture, of edifying the Body of Christ, and of doing all things to edification. The expression is metaphorical, taken from material buildings, often used by the Apostle with application to the Church of God, and the spiritual building thereof: for the Church is the House of the Living God; and all Christian members of this Church are as so many stones of this building, whereof the house is made up; and the bringing in unbelievers into the Church, by converting them to the Christian Faith, is as the fetching of more stones from the Quarries to be laid in the building. Now the building in it self (and that is edification) is the well and orderly joyning together of Christian men as living stones in truth and love, that they speak the same things, and that there be no divisions

Eph. 4. 12.

2 Cor. 12.

19.

1 Tim. 3.

15.

sions amongst them, that they may grow together, as it were, into one entire building, to make up a strong and comely house for the Masters use and honour.

(a) Indeed there is nothing more condu- a 1 Pet. 2.9
ceth hereunto, than Peace, Love, and

Concord: Knowledge is very little or nothing but a puff in comparison of Cha- b 1 Cor. 8.1
rity, in order to Edification: (b) It may

swell, and look big, and make a shew, but c 1 Cor. 1.10.
Charity doth the deed: (c) It lays the

stones together, and makes them couch

close one to another, and binds them up

with Fillings and Cement to make them

hold. Hence that wise Master-builder

S. Paul, that knew well what belongs to

this work, when he speaks of compact-

ing the Church into a building, mentions d Eph. 4.16.
the edifying of it self in love. (d) In-

deed when all the Workmen intend the

main business, each in his place and office

performing their appointed task with

cheerfulness and good agreement, then

doth the work go on, and the building

gets up apace and strongly; but when one

man draws one way, and another another

way; one will have things done after this

fashion; another after that; one mars

what another makes, pulls down what

D

another

another sets up, how is it possible while things go thus, that ever the building should be brought to any perfection or handsonness? and therefore well doth the Apostle joyn these two together, τὰ τῆς

e Rom. 14.

29.

εὐνομίαι καὶ τὰ τῆς ἀσυνουσίας. (e) Let us follow after the things that make for peace, and things wherewith we may edifie one another.

Where the hearts and tongues of the builders are divided, the building will either come to nothing, or prove but a *Babel* of confusion: for where envy and strife is, there is confusion, and every evil

f James 3.

16.

work. (f) Strife will make ill work, it will build up nothing, unless it be *Babels* walls: It is peace and concord that builds up the walls of *Jerusalem*, which as it hath its name from peace, so hath it also its perfection from peace; and then, and not before, shall *Jerusalem* be built, as a City that is at unity in it self; (g) when they that build *Jerusalem* are first at unity amongst themselves, when they speak the same things, and there is no divisions amongst them.

g 1. Cor. 12. 3

2. As this is the way to build the Church, so it is the way to preserve it both in peace, beauty, and safety.

1. In peace. The concord of Families

is

is their peace, so is amity and concord in the Church; whereas the divisions and discords of Christians disturbs their minds, and discomposeth the Church: *Pray for the peace of Jerusalem*, (b) saith ^{b Psal. 125} the Psalmist; but by different forms and ways there is a breach of that peace: such divisions in the Church are like wars and tumults in the Commonwealth, they discompose, and set it out of order. It was Sir Henry Wotton's excellent saying, *Disputandi pruritus Scabies Ecclesie*: The Itch of Disputing doth cause the Scab of the Church. Every Sect finds some little pleasure in scratching, by zealous wranglings and disputes for their several Opinions, till the blood be ready to follow; and at length it proves the baine of peace, and charity, and love, which is the very life and soul of Christian Religion: Now is not this, or should it not be an effectual Motive to this Unity, Unamity, and Uniformity? How dear should be the Churches peace to every member thereof? *Dulce nomen pacis*, the very name of peace sounds sweetly to the ear: there is such a mixture of pleasantness and profitable-ness in it, as wrapt the Psalmist into admiration, *ut prius miraretur quam ostende-*

i Psa. 133.1

ret; he admires it himself, and rouseth others to the like admiration: (1) Behold how good and pleasant a thing it is, Brethren to dwell together in unity: some things are pleasing, not good, as Epicurism and Good-fellowship; some things good, not pleasing, as Fasting and Martyrdom; but this both, for pleasure, it is like the Oyl poured out on Aaron's Head; for goodness, it is like the Dew on Hermon's Hill, which made the Valleys fruitful. So good and pleasant it is, that nothing can be pleasant without it: It is the desire of all hearts, the rest of all Nations, the end of all Contentions, *pacem te poscimus omnes*; nothing more desirable in Families, in Kingdoms, much more in the Church: And therefore lest we violate the Churches peace, it concerns us to speak the same things, lest there be no peace but divisions amongst us.

2. It is the way to preserve the Church in beauty and honour; the concord of Christians is their beauty and honour, and their divisions and discord is their deformity and shame. The Church stands upon two Staves, the Staff of Beauty, and the Staff of Bands: if the Staff of Bands be once broken, the Staff of Beauty cannot

not long stand, but by divisions our Beauty becomes deformity, Reformation deformation: as when one hand is black, and another white, one cheek pale, another red: so whilst we become several Churches, several Bodies, what do we but make a Monster of the Church, the Body of Christ! Indeed nothing more tends to the Churches dishonour, and Christs dishonour, than this: there is no such scandal to the Churches Enemies of all sorts, than this: the common Enemies of the truth of Religion, are chiefly As theism and Superstition; and wherefore serveth the home-differences of Christians, especially about indifferent things, about Gestures, and Vextures, and other indifferent Rites and Formalities, that for such things as these, (things in their own nature indifferent, and never intended to be otherwise imposed, than as matters of circumstances and order) men should desert their Ministerial Charges, fly out of the Church as out of *Babylon*, stand at open Defiance against lawful Authority, and sharpen their tongues and pens with so much petulancy and virulency as some have done; wherefore servet this, but to the dishonour of Christians

The Obligation of Conscience to Union
and Christianity, and to give scandal to the Enemies thereof?

1. To the Athiest: for he, till all men be of one Religion, and agreed in every point thereof too, (which I doubt will never be whilst the World lasteth) thinketh it the best wisdom to be of none, nay, makes it his best pastime to jeer at all: The agreement of Christians is an ocular demonstration to the World, that they have a certainty of the Faith which they profess, and that it is of a healing nature, and tendeth to the felicity of the world: so that never was Christians observed to live in an undivided Unity and unfained love, but the very Infidels and ungodly round about them did reverence both them and their Religion for it; whereas their discords and divisions give occasion to Atheists and Unbelievers to blaspheme, as if there were no certainty in their belief, or as if it were of a vexatious and destructive tendency: so that never were Christians divided, implacable, and bitter against each other, but it made them and their profession a scorn to the unbelieving and ungodly World. Their despising and vilifying one the other, teaches the wicked to despise and vilifie them all: as a well
ordered

ordered Army; and a City of uniform; and comely building is a pleasing and inviting sight to beholders; whereas a confused Rabble and ruinous heap breeds abhorrence; even so the very sight of the concordant society of Christians, is amiable to those without; whereas their disagreements and separations makes them odious. Hence the former conduceth much to the conversion and salvation of men; and the latter hardens men in wickedness, and hinders their coming into the Church, and their obedience to the truth. Who loveth to thrust himself into a fray? and what wise men will joyn with drunken men that are fighting in the streets? A more effectual way cannot be devised to drive men from Christ, than to represent Christians like a company of madmen that are tearing out the throats of one another: when one Faction flies upon, and speaks ill of one another, what wonder if the Atheist and Infidel speak ill of, and flies further from them all? whereas contrarily, the best means to win the World to a love of Holiness, is, if they can see that holiness makes men fervent and unfeigned in the love one of another. (k) Christs words in his prayer 1 Pet. 2. 22. are

1 John 17.
20, 21, 22,
23.

are notable to this purpose: (f) I pray, saith he, for them that shall believe on me through their word, that they all may be one: As thou Father art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us, that the world may believe that thou hast sent me, &c. It plainly implies, that the Unity of Christians is a great means of converting the World to the Christian Faith, and convincing Infidels of the truth of Christ, as sent by God: and so on the contrary, their divisions must needs be a scandal to them. Upon which account also, we have reason to take heed, to speak the same things, and that there be no divisions amongst us.

m Gen. 13.
7.

2. Such divisions give scandal to Papists. You read how loth was *Abraham* to fall out with *Lot*, and how desirous he was to compound the differences that were between their Herdmen; and one reason is hinted, in that it is said, (m) the *Canaanites* and *Perizzites* dwelt at that time in the Land. So have we in our Land many *Canaanites* and *Perizzites* at this day, that take offence at these divisions of ours, and makes it a chief occasion to alienate their hearts from the Truth of God. There be many Papists and Romanists

nists, confirmed and made obstinate in their Opinion of the Catholickness of the Romish Faith. Hereby, when they hear of so many things which have been ever, and are still retained in the Church of *England* in communion with the Church of *Rome*, as they were transmitted both to them and us in a continued Line of Succession from our Godly and Orthodox Forefathers, who lived in the Ages next to Christ and his Apostles, to be now inveighed against, and decryed as Popish and Superstitious. And when they see men, pretenders to Piety, Purity, and Reformation, more than others, not contenting themselves with those just Exceptions that had been formerly taken by the Church of *England*, and her regular children, against some Erronious Doctrines and Forms of Worship taught and practised in the Church of *Rome*, and endeavoured to be unduly, and by her sole Authority, imposed upon other Churches, when they see them not contenting themselves with these things, but even so far transported with a spirit of contradiction, as that they care not, so as they may but run far enough from *Rome*, whether, or how far they run, although they

should

should run themselves (as too oft they they do) quite beyond the bounds of Truth, Allegiance, common Reason, and even common Humanity also. Besides, we know it hath been, and is one grand objection of the Papists against the Reformed Churches, that the Fanatical dissensions amongst our selves are evident signs of an Heretical spirit, as *Bellarmino*, *Stapleton*, *Kellison*, and others argue; and *Fitz Simon*, an Irish Jesuite, hath written a whole Volume on this argument, which he calls *Britanio-Machia*. It's true how unhappy they have prov'd in this pretended Unity, which they make a note of their true Church, any one may judge that will but read the writings of Doctor *Field*, Bishop *Jewel*, and even the late Book of the Excellent Doctor *Stillingfleet* upon this argument, which proves them nevertheless faulty, however we be blame-worthy: As *Gregory Nazianzen* did answer those in his time that used the same argument, *ὅπως δὲ ἰδοὺ ἡμεῖς ἀποκρίσεσθαι ἡμῶν ἀναγκαῖον*; onely by this methinks we should be warn'd, if by no other consideration, to let such a spirit of peace and meekness shew it self in our lives and doctrines, *ut nihil de nobis male loqui*

Discourse concerning the Idolatry practised in the Church of Rome, by D. Edw. Stillingfleet.

loqui sine mendacio possint, that they may never have advantage with the same breath to speak both truly, and reproachfully against us. And to this end, to preserve the Churches beauty and honour, and to stop the mouth of the Adversary, and take away the occasion of scandal, let us speak the same things, and let there be no divisions amongst us. I add,

3. This want of Unity, Unanimity, and Uniformity among those that keep within the pale of the Church, gives scandal to those of the Separation, such Schismatics and Hereticks as are clean gone out, and have renounced all kind of communion with us; for they must needs think very jollily of themselves and their own singular way, when they shall find those very grounds whereon they have raised their Schism to be so stoutly pleaded for, and pursued by some that are yet content to hold a kind of communion with us: For there are many that will hold those Principles, besides which there can be nothing colourably pretended for inconformity in point of Ceremony and Church-Government, that will not yet admit of such conclusions naturally issuing thence, as will necessary in-

force.

See Toleration not to be abused.

force an utter separation. The *Separatists* Tenents are but the *Nonconformists* Principles improved; and then it is to be feared that the *Nonconformist* gives the occasion of offence and boasting to the *Separatist*; he lays the foundation for the others division from us, and so may happily have a right in that of our Saviour, (n) *Offences will be*, (for the tryal of the faith and patience of the Saints) *but va homini, vos to the men* (without repentance) *by whom the occasion of those offences comes*. In all these respects then, for the Churches honour, and to avoid that scandal that is thereby given to Atheist, Papist, and Separatist; let us speak the same things, and let there be no divisions amongst us: and as for the Churches beauty and honour, so

n Mat: 18.7

3. For the safety thereof; for divisions

1. Invite and incourage the Churches Enemies.

2. They weaken them to resist them.

1. They invite and incourage the Enemy, as it is noted of the Ancient *Britains*, their intestine contentions invited the Enemy to conquest. Nothing so much hearteneth and advantageth the Enemy abroad, as the fractions and dissensions that

we

we have at home : *Per discordias civiles externi attollunt animas*, said *Livy* once of old *Rome*. Whence our Countryman *Gildas* complained of old of this Island then imbroiled in wars, *fortis ad civilia bella, infirma ad retundenda hostium tela*, that by how much more her valour and strength was spent upon her self in managing of intestine and domestick broils, by so much the more she laid her self open to the outrages and incursions of forreign Enemies, *commune periculum concordia propulsandum*, saith *Tacitus*. The Churches peace and concord is the Tower of *David*, from whence we may repel our Adversaries, whom else we shall by our intestine differences cause to rejoyce. If all the members of the Church were but fast joyned together, saith *Dr. Reynolds*,
 † *vinculo fidei & glutine charitatis*, in the bond and cement of Faith and Love; if Governours, Teachers, and People, would but joyn hand in hand, the one to rule with Authority and Meekness, the other to teach with wisdom and compassion, the third to honour, both by humble submission to their judgment, and willing obedience to the guidance of their Governours and Pastors, then would they cut
 off

† In his excellent Sermon of the peace of the Church.

off all occasion from those that seek occasion, and disappoint the expectations of those that do, *captare tempora impacata & inquieta*, would be fishing in troubled waters. The Devil (as *Optatus* speaks) is tormented with the peace of Brethren, but is quicken'd and put into hopes of success in his attempts against the Church by the mutual ruptures and jealousies, that the members thereof foment and cherish amongst themselves; as when by *Jeroboam's* defection *Judah* and *Israel* were rent asunder, then came *Shishak* and troubled *Jerusalem*: (o) and as divisions invite and encourage the Churches Enemies, so

2 Chro.
12, 2.

2. They weaken her to resist them. The unity of Christians is their secondary strength; saith *Mr. Baxter*; their primary strength is Christ, and the Spirit of Grace which quickneth them; and their secondary strength is their union amongst themselves. Separation from Christ depriveth men of the first, and separation one from another depriveth them of the second: evermore *vis unita fortior*; but divisions weaken the Church, and dividers are certainly the weakners and destroyers of the Church: even Satan is sensible

sensible that his Kingdom divided cannot stand, and therefore he keeps an admirable unity in the members thereof; so that a whole Legion, consisting of many thousands of them, had but one name, one action, and one habitation in the man possessed with them: *Concordiâ res parvæ crescunt, discordiâ dilabuntur*; the wall is hollow and loose where the stones stand off one from another, and couch not close: Now brotherly love and unity is it that bindeth all fast, and makes of loose heaps one entire piece. Observe the expression in the Text; *I beseech you Brethren*, saith the Apostle, *that there be no divisions amongst you, but that ye be perfectly joyned together in the same mind, and in the same judgment*. Like-mindedness, you see, is the thing that joyneth all together, and in the well joyning consisteth the strength of any structure:

Whence we read of *the bond of peace*, (p) Eph. 4. 3. and *the bond of perfectness*: (q) An expression of the like importance you have, (r) *That I may hear of your affairs*, saith he, *that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind*. Christians never stand so fast as when they are of one mind: whence there is a Greek word sometimes used in the

f Bishop
Saunders
son's Ser-
mons, p.
270.

the New Testament, as Bishop *Saunderson* observes, (f) viz. *ἀκαραρία*, which is commonly translated Confusion, and sometimes Tumult; neither of which Translations are unfit for the sense; but in the Literal Notation it rather imports, a kind of unstableness or unsettledness, when a thing doth not stand fast, but shaketh and tottereth; and is in danger of falling. And this *S. Paul* opposeth to peace; *God is not the Author*, saith he, *ἀκαραρία* of confusion, but of peace. Intimating by the very opposition, that it is mostly for want of peace that things do not stand fast; but are ready to fall into discords and confusion. *S. James* speaks out what *S. Paul* but intimateth, and tells us plainly, that this *ἀκαραρία* is the effect of discord; and that contention is the Mother of Confusion; for where envying and strife is, saith he, there is *ἀκαραρία* (i) unconstan-
cy, unsettledness, confusion, and every evil work. The Builders do but make ill work where the building is not like to stand, but threatneth ruine, and is ready to drop down again by that time it be well up: yet such ill work doth envying and strife ever make; it is concord and union only that maketh good work,

work, and buildeth strong. Let Jerusalem be built as a City at unity in it self: (a) and Jerusalem is like to stand the faster and longer for it; like *seleucus* his bundle of Sticks, *insuperabiles dum inseparabiles*, they could not be broken; insuperable while inseparable; such is a Church, a Land, a Corporation, while it is at unity: But O how weak is it when it is divided? like those Rods pulled asunder out of the bundle, which the weakest Child could snap asunder? is not this so in all other things? An Army is stronger than a man, a Kingdom than a Single Person; a Flame burns more strongly than a single Spark; the Waves of the Ocean are more forceable than a single drop; a three-fold Cord is not easily broken. Hence weak Commonwealths seek to strengthen themselves by Confederacies with other Sates: Alas Brethren, many are our spiritual and temporal Enemies, and strong is the League of Impiety that we are to encounter with in this world; our most united Forces, and joynt endeavours, are all little enough against them: Aud can a few single straglers hope for Victory, when whole Troops of *Moab*, *Ammon*, and Mount *Seir*, are to encounter

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counter

counter them? Shall *Brittain* still retain that folly whereof *Tacitus* of old branded them, *dum singuli pugnant universi vincuntur*, whilst they resisted singly, they were overcome universally; being divided they were destroyed. Thus it was with the Kingdom, and thus it will be with the Church. If we do not speak the same things, but there be, and continue to be divisions amongst us. By several ways, and several forms, we make the Church a very *Babel* of Confusion; and if *Babels* confusion go before, *Babels* destruction will follow after: Dividers are certainly *Abaddons*, Destroyers, destroyers of the Church; what good soever they pretend; * As those means which best corroborate the body, and fortifie the spirits, do best cure many particular diseases, which no means would cure while Nature is debilitated; so are the Church Diseases best cured by uniting fortifying remedies, which will be encreased by a dividing way of Reformation: dividing is wounding, and uniting is the closing of the wound. It's Satans usual way to pretend to a good work, when he purposeth to destroy it; he resisteth Light as an Angel of Light; he will be a zealous Reformer,

* Mr. Baxter's cure.

Reformer, when he would hinder Reformation; and it is Satans mark of Reformation: he doth it by dividing the Church of Christ, and teaching Christians to avoid each other; and he destroyeth their love to one another, by pretending love to themselves, as if he would have them but to avoid sin and Church-corruptions: and in this dividing work the Devil doth as Make-bates use to do, that first goes to one man, and tell him what such an one said against him, and what a dangerous person he is; and then go to another, and saith as much of the first to him. So the Devil zealously aggravates the faults of every party to others, that they may have odious thoughts of one another, and so as they love their Souls avoid them. So this dividing Spirit just gives such counsel to men for the preservation of their Souls; as if a man should thus, in pretended kindness, counsel a man for the preservation of his health, and bodily comfort. O take heed of that Mouth, and that Belly, for it getteth nothing, but devours all that the hands do get by labour; or cast off that hand, for it hath a crooked finger; or that gouty foot, that it may not trouble the whole body; or rip up those guts

* Thus far
Mr. Baxter.

which have such filthy excrements in them; is not such kindness to be suspected? * Behold the Devils wiles and stratagems; be wise, and avoid them; I beseech you; and therefore for the Churches peace, and beauty, and honour, and safety, be exhorted to labour after unity, unanimity, and uniformity, to speak the same things, and that there be no divisions amongst you. These are the third sort of Motives while you look upon the Church of God: But

4. Though ye should have little regard either to God, or the Church of God, yet look upon your selves, even in point of wisdom, and out of self-love; it concerns Christians, every one in his place, to labour to speak the same things with other Christians, and to avoid divisions from them.

1. For your own safeties sake; for if the whole be in danger, so is every part. Hence the Marriners called upon *Jonah*, *What meanest thou, O sleeper, arise, call upon thy God*; as if they had said, if the whole Ship be lost, so will every Soul in it, and thou amongst the rest. Perhaps some may think their own safety obligeth them to be dividers, to hold up a Faction and

and Division, or at least not to meddle in their Stations towards the healing them: but to such I say as *Mordecai* did to *Ester*, *Think not thou alone shalt escape, if thou hold thy peace*: O no, O no, deliverance may arise another way, but thou and thy Fathers house shall be destroyed; therefore if you have respect for your own safety labour for peace, and unity, and unanimity, and uniformity with your Brethren, that you speak, &c.

2. For your own peace also; for this is one way for Christians to attain a peace with God, and man, and themselves. The Apostle speaks of some (b) that please not God, but are contrary to all men: I think it may be said of Dividers, Authors, or Fomenters of division, they cannot please God, while they study how to be contrary to all men. I shall not need, saith Dr. *Reynolds* in his Sermon of the Peace of the Church, to load them with any other guilt than the Apostle doth, that they are not the servants of Christ: (c) For how can he who is without peace and love, serve or please that God who is the God of Peace, and whose Name is Love, and whose Law is Love? *Non habent Dei charitatem qui non diligunt Ec-*

The 2.

Rom. 15.

17.

d A known
Place, it is
lib 3. ch. 16.
de Baptism.

They are
but like
Cain, as
fled from
the place
of rest, so
dwelling in
the Land
of Nod i.e.
of wan-
dring. Vid.
Dr. Still-
ingfleet's
Sherinah
in lucum.

clesia unitatem; saith S. Austin; (d) nor
need I to dismiss them with a more fearful
Curse than that of the Apostle too, I
would they were even cut off that troubles
you. The Archans, the Troublers of Is-
rael, must expect trouble and no peace
from the God of Israel, nor can such have
any peace in themselves for being given
to change, they are but like Noah's Dove
fluttering from place to place, having no
rest for the soles of their feet, till they
return to the Ark again: They are like
children tossed to and fro with every
wind of Doctrine, and even when they
think themselves fixed, they most what
still have some jealousies remaining in
their minds, that possibly they are decei-
ved; so that they seldom have any rest,
unless they come at last to a hardness of
of heart, and a stupid and benumbing in
sensual security, crying Peace where there
is no Peace; for no true peace, no true
rest is to be had, till they come to this
speaking the same things, without divisi-
on, from their Brethren: How often do
we see them like drunken men reeling to
and fro, carried from this to that ex-
treme, till they come at last to conclude
in Atheism and Infidelity; whereas by be-
ing

ing united, particular Christians would be strengthened in the truth, knowing nothing more to do, but to grow in Grace, and make Progress from degree to degree in Holiness, which is the very design of Christianity. Indeed

It concerns every one to labour after this Unity, if they do but consider that this alone will put them in a fit posture to receive the blessing of God. It

is remarkable, the Psalmist (e) exhorts

e Psa 134.

the people; Behold, bless ye the Lord, all ye servants of the Lord, which stand in the House of the Lord. Mark, he exhorts them

plurally, Ye, and all ye, bless ye; but in the third verse he prays to God to bless

the people singularly; The Lord bless thee out of Zion. Plures benedixit ut benedi-

cant, ipse, uni benedixit; saith S. Austin: He exhorts all to bless the Lord, but he

blesseth all from the Lord as one man. It hints, that then God useth to bless his

people, when they are at unity as one man. So Christ came to his Disciples

with a blessing when they were a rowing together; (f) and to his Apostles with

f Mat 14.

a blessing of Peace when they were assembled together; (g) and he sent his

g John 20.

Holy Ghost to them when with one ac-

19.

cord they were met together: And so the Promise runs, *If there two or three are met together in my Name, there am I in the midst of them.* While Christians disagree in their manner of serving, and blessing, and worshipping God, God will not bless them, as He will do, if in one way, and with one mouth and heart they glorifie their Father: if they speak the same things, and there be no divisions amongst them: if he will hear the prayers of Christians when two or three are united together, how much more when several thousands? nay, not only all in a Congregation, but all in all Congregations throughout a whole Land are united, speaking and asking the same things, In this case, sure if in any, *the Kingdom of Heaven suffereth violence, and the violent taketh it by force:* On the contrary, if there be divisions, we can never be so hopeful in our prayers, for these divisions most what causeth alienation of affections, and so we cannot pray with such hopes of Audience, because we cannot then lift up pure hands without wrath: the clamour of our boiling malice to each other, will out-cry our prayers; our dissentions will make that sweet Incense

cence stink in Gods Nostrils, and will turn our Prayers into Curses, if we do not speak the same things, but there be divisions amongst us.

Many more Motives I might heap up to inforce our Exhortation, especially that drawn from the many examples we have set before us; as that of God the Father, who being provoked by us, yet by all means seeks peace and union with us; hath sent his Ministers of Reconciliation to beseech us to be reconciled unto him, loadeth us with his blessings, causeth his Sun to shine, and his Rain to fall on us, and all to induce us to be at peace with himself: And can we be partakers of the Divine Nature, or Sons of our Heavenly Father, if we be not Followers of him, as dear Children, in endeavouring to be united one with another? Nay, Christ his Son did become Incarnate to unite us to God, and make our peace with God; yea, and loe, the Prince of Peace came to dwell amongst men for this end, when peace was amongst men in *Augustus's* days, when there was general quiet and union through all the World, and at his Birth the Angels proclaimed peace on Earth,
good

good will towards men. O how then can we be Disciples of Christ, and not follow after peace, to speak the same things, and that there be no divisions amongst us? yea, and this Oyl of Charity poured on Christ the Head, did run down to the Beard, yea, unto the skirts of all his garments; for all the Saints of God now in heaven have gone thither in this way of peace: *Abraham* said to *Lot*, *Let there be no contentions amongst us, for we are Brethren*; *Stephen* prayed for his Persecutors, *Father, forgive them*. The Saints were ever peace-makers, and not peace-disturbers, or dividers: Nay, very wicked men and Devils are sensible of the benefit of this way of union one with another; therefore did *Ephraim* and *Manasse* agree together against *Judah*, *Herod* and *Pilate*, *Scribes* and *Pharisees* against Christ: Nay, very brut beasts covet an union, *sevis inter se convenit urbis*: and shall we be more blockish than they? In a word, God styles himself the God of Peace, Christ the Prince of Peace; his Name is *Immanuel*, a Name of Peace, was Crowned at his Baptism with a Dove, the Emblem of Peace, being in the building of the Church *his equalis lapis* a Corner-stone,

stone, the place of Peace, coming into the World with a Song of Peace, and going out of the World with a Legacy of Peace. The Spirit the Bond of Peace, the Gospel the Covenant of Peace, and the word of Reconciliation, Ministers Ambassadors thereof, *Jerusalem* the type of the Church, signifies in the Hebrew Tongue the Vision of Peace; and the bliss in Heaven we all look for, is nothing else but Eternal Peace, where we shall all speak the same things without division to the glory and praise of God: If then we be Sons of the God of Peace, Servants of the Prince of Peace, Temples of the Spirit of Peace, Professors of the Gospel of Peace, if we have any Consolations in the Ministers the Ambassadors of Peace, if we be Citizens of *Jerusalem* the Vision of Peace, and hope to be gathered to our Fathers, to enjoy an eternal Sabbath of Peace; if there be in us any consolation in Christ, any comfort of love, any fellowship of the Spirit, let it be our care to walk by this Rule of Peace, Unity, Unanimity, and Uniformity with our Brethren, to speak the same things, and that there be no divisions amongst us; but let us be perfectly joyned together in

the same mind, and the same judgment; and as many as walk according to this Rule, peace be upon them, and the whole *Israel of God*.

Now that you may see how Christians are to speak the same things, and how they may and must order their endeavours to avoid divisions, give me leave to close my Exhortation with sundry Directions picked out of the Analogy of Faith. The skilful Physitian must not only discover the disease, and perswade his Patient to use all means to prevent and remedy it, but he must also direct him what remedies to use, and how to use them. The directions I shall give you, you cannot like the worse, because most of them, I confess, I have (though in a different method) out of that excellent Sermon of Doctor *Edward Reynolds* of the Peace of the Church, to which I have added some Heads, and some enlargements; better I could not find, let him do it that can, such wholesome Rules being therein offered, as would compose the most turbulent spirits to some moderation, if they would walk up to them; and joyntly considered, exceedingly conducing to heal the breaches of the Church of God.

Then

Then by way of caution, that you mi- Direcl. 1.
 stake me not, know, that though you
 must speak the same things, and avoid di-
 visions, and labour to be of the same
 mind and judgment, yet this Exhortati-
 on admits of a limitation, it must be on-
 ly, if it be possible, and as much as lieth
 in you, without any shipwrack of truth
 and holiness: For howsoever Unity, U-
 nanimity, and Uniformity be well plea-
 sing unto God, yet is it not such an Uni-
 ty as he desireth, unless it be truth and
 peace together; such a peace and unity
 as is according to truth and godliness in
 Christ Jesus: there may be an agreement
 together *in falso*, when men hold together
 for the maintenance of one and the same
 common error. Such as is an agreement,
 as our Learned *Davenant* (g) observes. g Epist. de
pacificat.

1. Of Hereticks, in case of Heresies,
 when Adversaries speak all the same
 things, to deny or deprave the Faith of
 the Gospel, as *Hymenius* and *Philetus* did,
 (h) who sought to overthrow mens Faith h 2 Tim. 2.
18.
 in the Resurrection.

2. Of Idolaters, in case of Idolatry;
 (i) if *Israel* play the Harlot, let not *Ju-* i Hos. 4. 15.
dah transgress, for *τις συνκατάδοις* what
 agreement hath the Temple of God with k 2 Cor. 6.
16.
 Idols? (k)

3. There

3. There may be an agreement of Ufurpers, in case of Tyranny, when any shall usurp and exercise Domination over the Consciences of men, to bring them into bondage unto Doctrines of Errours, and make Articles of Faith for all Churches to submit unto; as the *Romish Church*, and especially as the *Tridentine Councel* have done. In which case the Apostle had no patience to give place by subjection to them, no not for one hour.*

*Gal 2.4,5

Neque enim quisquam nostrum Episcopum se esse Episcoporum constituit, aut Tyrannico terrore ad obsequendi necessitatem collegas suos adegit, saith *S. Cyprian* in the Councel of *Carthage*, in the case of Re-baptization (*m*). Yea, 2. There may be an agreement *in malo*, when men combine together in a Confederacy for the compassing of some mischievous design, as did those forty and odd that bound them-

*m Lib. de
sentent. E
piscop. de
hæretic.
redapt.*

*Acts 23.
12,13.

selves with a Curse to destroy *Paul* (*n*): such as is the agreement of Thieves, Cheats, Drunkards, Whoremongers, and Fornicators, and Rebels, among themselves: such agreements as these no Christian ought to joyn with, or be of the same mind or judgment with them: The wisdom of the Flesh, and cunning of the Devil.

Devil, will bring men fast enough to those cursed agreements, without which he and his knows well enough, his Kingdom cannot stand. Gods Servants have rather evermore bent themselves by their prayers and endeavours, to dissolve the Glue, and break these Confederacies of the ungodly. *Destroy their tongues;* O Lord, divide them, was holy David's prayer (o). And S. Paul, when he stood before the Sanedrim at Jerusalem, to take off his malicious Accusers the better, perceiving both the Judges and by standers to be of two different Factions, some *Pharisees* who believed a Resurrection, and others *Sadducees* that denied it, he did wisely to cast a bone amongst them (p). In this case then the Rule is certain, that though we must labour for Unity, yet are we *ἐκκλησιαστικαί*, as S. Jude speaks, (q) to contend earnestly for the great things of the Law and Gospel, those that are either Foundations themselves, or are most visibly and immediately adjacent and contiguous to the Foundation. Hence Paul and Barnabas had no small dissention and disputation with the false Brethren, that taught the necessity of Judaical Rites unto Salvation: (r) And Athanasius the Great

o Pla. 55. 9.

p Acts 23.

6, 7, 10.

q Verie 3.

r Acts 15. 2

f Aust. B.
pist. 136.
& opt.
lib. 2.
1 Epist. 325.
ad Epiph.

x Col. 1. 5.

w 1 Tim.
3. 16.

x Heb. 7. 2.

y James 3.
17.

z Eph. 4. 3.

Great would not have the Orthodox Brethren to receive *τύπον εἰρηνικόν* any Forms, or Letters, Communications, or Pacifications, from George the *Arrian* Persecutor: (f) And Basil the Great (t) giveth an excellent reason of it, *ἵνα δὲ γὰρ τὴν ἀπλότητα τῆς πίστεως ἀπὸ παλαιότητος ἀπέτρεψε τὸν λόγον ἐνέχομεν*: If once (saith he) we shake the simplicity of the Faith, and retain not that as a Rule and Measure of Inferiour Differences, Disputes and Contentions will prove endless; therefore the Unity that must be laboured after, and maintained amongst Christians in the Church, must be a Christian Unity, that is, a happy Concord, in walking together in the same path of truth and godliness. The Word of Christ is the Word of Truth (u); and the Mystery of Christ is the Mystery of Godliness (w); and Christ that is the King of *Salem*, is the King of Righteousness also (x): Whatsoever then is contrary to these, Truth, or Godliness, or Righteousness, cannot be acceptable unto Christ (y): The wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable; and our Unity must be the Unity of the Spirit: (z) *Ea enim sola Ecclesie pax est quae Christi pax est*, saith Hilary.

Here

Here are our bounds set us; our *ne plus ultra*, beyond which if we pass we transgress, and are exorbitant, *usque ad aras*: The Altar-stone is the mear stone; all Bonds of Friendship, all Offices of Neighbourhood must give way, when the Honour of God and his Truth lies at stake: we must buy the Truth, and not sell it for any remporal advantages: The Church is Militant, and must maintain Wars with Principalities, and Powers, and Spiritual Wickednesses: and Christ came to send a Sword upon Earth against all dangerous Errors of mind and manners. If peace will be had upon fair terms, or indeed upon any terms (*Salvis veritate & pietate*) without impeachment of truth and piety, it ought to be imbraced; but if it will not come upon harder conditions, better let it go. A man may buy Gold too dear: Follow peace with all men, and holiness, saith S. Paul, (a) without which no man shall see the Lord; not without which peace, but without which holiness, no man can see the Lord: for the Gender of the Pronoun is not Feminine, not *is* *χρεις*, but *is* *χρεις*: without peace some man may see the Lord, having faithfully endeavoured it, though he can-

a Heb. 12.
14.

not obtain it, (for that is not his fault) but without holiness (which if any man want, it is his own fault only) no man shall see the Lord: Our speaking the same things then, and being joyned together in the same mind and judgment, must have this limitation, so far forth as may stand with Christian truth and godliness. Now for positive directions: To this then joyn in the second place.

Dirrcl. 2.

That so the main of truth and godliness be but preserved inviolate, then must Christians, by all means, seek Unity, Unanimity, and Uniformity, to speak the same things. It's true the Heathen said truly, that *nihil minimum in Religione*, yet we know our Saviour distinguisheth between *Mint* and *Cummin*, (b) and the great things of the Law. And the Apostolical Synod at Jerusalem, (c) between things necessary and unnecessary; and S. Paul (d) between meats and drinks, and the Kingdom of God; and elsewhere between the Foundation and Superstructure. (e) Some truths there are which belong *ad fidem Catholicam*, others which only pertain *ad scientiam Theologicam*: Some are *questiones nicas*, saith Gregory Nazianzen, others *κατασκευαί*: some are *de fide*,

b Mat. 23.
23.

c Acts 25.
28.

d Rom. 14.
7.

e 1 Cor. 3.
10, 11.

fide, others *circa fidem*, being such perillous superinducements as may bruise and wrench the foundation, others *præter fidem*, in quibus *salvâ fide quâ Christiani sumus*, ignoratur verum; as S. *Austin* speaks (*f*), in which we may err or be ignorant, believe or suspend without any hazard to the common Faith. In one word, as *Tertullian* distinguisheth of sins, so may we of opinions; some are *quotidianæ incurfionis*, such as are usually incident to humane frailty, and some are *dogmata devoratoria salutis*, such as proceed from heretical pride, or blindness. Now though we must, as I said before, contend earnestly for the Faith, the Foundations themselves, (against Heresies, Idolatry, or Tyranny) or such points as are immediately adjacent to the Foundations, yet so long as there is sound agreement in Fundamental Truths, and in the simplicity of the Gospel, we must deny our own wits, and silence our disputes, in matters merely notional; or Canons that have little or no necessary influence into Faith, or godly living, speaking the same things with our Brethren in those matters, rather than spend our precious hours in impertinent contentions: so as for gain of a

f De peccato Origin. cap 23

small truth, to shipwreck a great deal of
 love, and by perplexing our minds with
 less matters, take off our thoughts from
 more necessary and spiritual employments.
 It was a wise and seasonable rebuke which
 the Marriners in a dangerous Tempest
 gave to a Philosopher, who troubled them
 with an impertinent discourse, *quis deus
 ad quædam quæstiones*, we perish whilst thou
 triflest. So is it sad that it can be truly
 said of any, that (whilst they so wrangle
 about such questions as gender strife,
 those, whose poor souls, ready happily to
 sink under the Tempest of Sin and Death)
 cry out like the Man of Macedonia in
 St. Pauls Vision, *Come and help us*; do
 for want of the plain and compendary
 way of Faith, Repentance, Good Works,
 Spiritual Worship, and Evangelical Obe-
 dience, which should be taught them, be-
 come a prey to the envious man, who
 while we sleep will be sure to watch, and
 goes about seeking whom he may devour.
 O that we would be wise then, by all
 means to preserve the unity of the Spirit
 in the bond of peace, and in nothing to
 give offence to the Church of God, but
 rather silence and smother our *domestica
 iudicia*, our private judgments, and sin-
 gular

gular fancies and conceits, leaving all small dissensions to Elias, *quum venerit*, as the *Aeropagite* did some causes to the hundred year (g) being stiff and pe-
 remptory in none of these things against the quiet of Gods Church, but speaking the same things, even such things that may make men confess that God is in us of a truth. *Insubstante ac facili est eternitas*, saith S. Hilary excellently, God leadeth not his people unto life eternal by knots and inextricable questions, by verbal wranglings or contentions. *Curiositate opus non est*, we have no need of Curiosity, saith Tertul. Our work is to be Christians in practice, not Criticks in doubtful Disputations. We do but mistake the design of Christianity; if we fix our selves in perplexed conceits and humours; nay, we pervert it, if we raise and pursue contentions in the Church, saith Mr. Hilderham (h): This is a mark of ungodly and graceless men, such as serve not the Lord Jesus, but their own bellies (i). It agrees this with S. Judes description of Seducers in his time (k). On the contrary, every man that fears God, his great care is to love God, and keep his Commandments (l): But as for
 F 3 doubt.

12. 10. m
 A Gell.
 p. 12. c. 7.

h Up to
 John 4. 23.

i Rom. 16.
 17, 18.
 k Verses 8,
 11, 12.

l 1 John 5:
 2.

in Psal. 35.
20.

The de-
sign of
Christiani-
ty by
M Fowler.

doubtful things, he is of a peaceable disposition in them, he is of the number of them that are quiet in the land (20). He spends not the heat of his zeal about, for, or against doubtful Opinions, alterable Modes, Rites, and circumstances of Religion; they are things too weak to lay much weight upon them, being so little serviceable or disserviceable to the very design and frame of Christianity, further than as our humility, and obedience, and meekness, and other Christian Graces, are exercised and manifested by them. Indeed an eager defending or opposing such kind of things, is (to use the similitude of an excellent Person) like the Apes blowing at the Glowworm, which affords neither light nor heat: nay, by woful experience we find it very injurious to the very design of Christianity, as that which often hardens Atheistically disposed persons, when they observe the contentions of Christians about matters of this nature, for thereby they often take a measure of their whole Religion; and besides an eager concernedness about indifferent things, is too ordinarily accompanied with a luke-warm, or rather frozen indifferencies concerning the most important points, and the

the Indispensables of Christianity. It is too visibly apparent to be denied (saith Mr. Fowler) that those that have such a scalding hot Zeal either for, or against things of no certainty, and no necessity, are many of them (as their Predecessors the Pharisees were) in the very other Extreme, as to not a few of the weightiest matters of Religion: wherefore in these things I beseech you, so as Fundamentals of Faith and Godliness be but preserved inviolate, let us speak the same things, and let there be no divisions amongst us. To this end

Page 240.

3. Let our great care be an *united* and *harmonious*, a joynt obedience to the truth wherein we all agree, and pursuance of those pious ends we all profess. It's the Apostles Rule, this in the very case; (*n*) *wherunto we have already attained*, saith he, let us walk by the same Rule, let us mind the same things; for this we must know, that the love of God, and Conscience of his Commandments, is the right way to know him, and the secrets of his Word. *Si in Christi lumine ambulare volumus, a preceptis ejus & monitis non recedamus*, saith S. Cyr. If any man will do the will of God, he shall know the Do-

n Phil.

10.

John 7.
17.

John 1.
2,3,4.

Psa. 118.

Lib. 6.

Ep. 29.

1 Tim. 6.
3.

Strive, saith Christ (o), Hereby we know that we know him, if we keep his Commandments, saith S. John (p). Those things which we learn to do, we learn by doing, saith Aristotle. *Nisi fidelium operum usus praeceperit doctrina cognitio non apprehendetur*, saith S. Hilary (q). The right knowledge of Divine Truth is not only intellectual for the Brain, but experimental for the Conscience, and consisteth much in the taste of spiritual things. *Quod in cibis gustus, in sacris intellectus*, saith S. Basil. *Videamultos parvo ingenio, literis nullis, ut bene agerent peragendo consecutos*, saith Pliny (r). Hence that expression of the Apostle, (s). *Knowledge according to Godliness*; They therefore that resolve to make it their daily care to keep a good Conscience, are most likely by the other helps of Learning and Industry, to find out the truths wherein Christians are apt to disagree: for the very Heathen Philosopher Aristotle could say, *κακία θάραξιν ἀγχοῦν*, wickedness putrifies the principles of the mind, and that such as are mens courses of life, such are likewise the dispositions of their minds towards practical truths: A corrupt heart usually makes a corrupt judgment. *Dum*

his

Vide Dod.
Holdf-
worth's
Lect. 40.
p. 350.

silver not allayed, nor reduced to usefulness by wisdom and mature Learning, it often proves the occasion of much unquiet in the Church: Through this zeal, Truth it self is often stretched too far, and by a vehement dislike of Errour on the one side, men often run into an Errour of the other, As *Dionysius Alexandrinus* being too fervent against *Sabellius* laid the grounds of *Arrianism*: And *S. Chrysostom* is observed, in zeal against the *Maniches*, to have too much extolled the Power of Nature: And *Acosta* observes of *S. Jerom*, that *ardore ferendi adversarias premit interdum socias*. So are there many who out of a hatred of the Papists, run into other extremes of Enthusiasm or Prophaneness; Yea, by this misguided zeal it is, that men do sometimes marvellously alienate the minds of one another from peace, by loading the contrary Doctrines with envious consequences, which the Consciences of the Adversaries do abhor: which course usually tend to Exacerbation, whereby Truth never gaineth so much as Charity and Peace do lose. It's true, Acrimony and sharpness of rebuke is sometimes necessary, towards men of obstinate and pernicious

pernicious minds (1); but amongst Bre-
 thren, yea Adversaries that are not in-
 corrigible, all things ought to be carried
 with lenity and meekness (2), and with
 a mutual *συγκατάβασις* or condescension
 to one anothers weaknesses (3). *Sepis
 morsus non nocet*, (Epiphanius Heres. 36.)
vespa quod acrius pungit minus laedit. He
 observes, that there be some Creatures,
 that the more they sting, the less they
 hurt: And so in any dispute, that man
 doth less hurt with his Argument, that
 betakes himself to biting and intempe-
 rate Language. In these things then we
 should carry ourselves, saith Doctor Rey-
 nolds, *non ἐκλογιστὶς sed ἀδελφικῶς*, as Bre-
 thren, not as Enemies, not to uncover
 the nakedness of our Brethren. But as it
 is said of Athanasius the Great, *dissen-
 sibus magnis*, by his meekness he drew
 those that dissented from him; so should
 we (if it be possible) make the truth a
 gainer by our mild handling of them that
 vary from us. Christ himself did de-
 vest himself of his Glory and Majesty, to con-
 descend to our vileness, and bear with our
 infirmities; so should we imitate the ex-
 ample of our Master, according to that
 grave advice of Nazianzen *ἡμεῖς ἑαυτοὺς*

κρίνομεν

11. *1 Cor. 10.* *14.* *15.* *16.* *17.* *18.* *19.* *20.* *21.* *22.* *23.* *24.* *25.* *26.* *27.* *28.* *29.* *30.* *31.* *32.* *33.* *34.* *35.* *36.* *37.* *38.* *39.* *40.* *41.* *42.* *43.* *44.* *45.* *46.* *47.* *48.* *49.* *50.* *51.* *52.* *53.* *54.* *55.* *56.* *57.* *58.* *59.* *60.* *61.* *62.* *63.* *64.* *65.* *66.* *67.* *68.* *69.* *70.* *71.* *72.* *73.* *74.* *75.* *76.* *77.* *78.* *79.* *80.* *81.* *82.* *83.* *84.* *85.* *86.* *87.* *88.* *89.* *90.* *91.* *92.* *93.* *94.* *95.* *96.* *97.* *98.* *99.* *100.* *101.* *102.* *103.* *104.* *105.* *106.* *107.* *108.* *109.* *110.* *111.* *112.* *113.* *114.* *115.* *116.* *117.* *118.* *119.* *120.* *121.* *122.* *123.* *124.* *125.* *126.* *127.* *128.* *129.* *130.* *131.* *132.* *133.* *134.* *135.* *136.* *137.* *138.* *139.* *140.* *141.* *142.* *143.* *144.* *145.* *146.* *147.* *148.* *149.* *150.* *151.* *152.* *153.* *154.* *155.* *156.* *157.* *158.* *159.* *160.* *161.* *162.* *163.* *164.* *165.* 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5. To this end also, and to moderate our

our zeal, according to the fourth direction, be we cloathed with Humility: Our knowledge is apt to beget Pride, and Pride is the Mother of Contention: Only by Pride cometh Contention, saith Solomon; *He that is of a proud spirit stirreth up strife* (d). Yea, it is the Mother of Heresies, whereas Humility is the chief breeder and preserver of Unity. Hence the Apostle, when he exhorts to unity and love, he tells us first, that we must with all meekness, and holiness, and long-suffering, forbear one another, or else we can never keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace (e): And when he exhorts (f), to be of one accord, and one mind, he tells us, (g) that if we would do so, we must in lowliness of mind esteem each other better than our selves: As the juice of the same Earth is sweet in the Grape, but bitter in Wormwood; as the same Odour is a refreshment to the Dove, but a Poyson to the *Scarabaany* or Beetle, so the same Learning and Knowledge, qualified with Charity and Humility, is admirable useful to edifie the Church; which with pride and contempt of others is most mischievous and dangerous. Ever therefore let

d Prov 28.
25.

e Eph. 4.
2,3.
f Phil. 2.2.
g Verle 8.

us be careful to correct and keep down the rising of our knowledge by humility, not censuring or despising one another. Pride made the *Donatists* to forsake the Catholic Unity, which *S. Cyprian* (in the same judgment, but with more humility) did not disturb. Humility in weak ones would make them docible and tractable, if they were but sensible of their own blindness in the things of God, they would lay aside their private conceits, and not rack the Scriptures, to say something for them (as *Demosthenes* said of the Oracle, that it did *παλαίτριον*) but they would then resign up their judgments to the light of Gods Word, and clear Reason, and when their errors are discovered, hold their peace. And humility in strong ones would make them far from censuring their Brethren, would put them in the form of servants, and cloath them with *φιλανθρωπία*, Brotherly Love, which is *magnus persuadendi artifex*, a very great means to work on others judgments, to take off all such impediments as usually rise from personal prejudices in the disquisition of truth. When *Benhadad's* servants observed the word (Brother) to come out of *Abah's* mouth,

mouth, they hastily laid hold on it, as an excellent preparation to settle those differences which were betwixt those two Princes (*h*). It was a good temper in *Calvin*, who professed, that though *Zuther* should call him Devil, (for he knew his heat) yet would he still acknowledge him for an excellent Servant of God. O that there were the same affections in us! Had we this humility, it would make the one condescend to the others weakness, and the other willing to learn any (though unwelcome) Truth, and unlearn any (though darling) error, it would make them obey with duty what they are not able with reason to gainsay; and so we should doubtless speak the same things, and there would be no divisions amongst us.

6. As to this end we must moderate the fervour of our zeal with patience, and mutual condescensions, and humility, so must we ever set our zeal upon the right object, even upon our selves. Censoriousness of others, is a chief cause of divisions and differences amongst us. It was this that *S. Paul* discerned in the *Romans* (*i*), the weak were censorious of the strong, and the strong disdained the weak;

h 1 King
20, 33.

i Rom. 15.

weak; but neither of both did look in to the other end of the Wallet; to examine thoroughly their own spirits. We use to say, if every one would mend one, all would be well: I, but there are many ready to mend, not only one, but ten, a thousand; all about them: Every one would be mending one, but not the right one; his Brother, but not himself. O the falseness and hypocrisie of mens hearts blinded with self-love! Thus doth it fill the world with divisions and offences: The disease is hypocrisie, as the Great Physician shews (1); the symptoms are to be eat-eyed outward in readily espying something in a Brothers eye, even the smallest Moat, and to be Bat-eyed inward, in not perceiving a Beam in a mans own eye. And a third symptom is to be tampering with a Brothers eyes, and offering his service, to help him out with a Moat there, before he think a thought of doing any thing towards the clearing of his own eyes. The remedy is to begin at home; if we put things in their right order, the business is done; *tu conversus confirma fratres*, strengthen thy Brethren what thou canst: Is a good office, and must not be neglected, but something more needful is first

i Luke 6.
41, 42.

first to be done, that thou mayest do that much better, be converted thy self first, be reformed first, *τὸτε διαβλήτης*, (k) then *k* Luke 5. shall thou see clearly to remove the Moat ⁴² out of thy Brothers eye; be sure first thy self be converted, and then in Gods Name deal with thy weak Brother as thou seest cause, and strengthen him. O that those would consider this that are so forward to censure others, especially their Superiours! Magistrates and Ministers actions, ever and anon complaining, how ill things are carried by them, and yet never take notice of their own sins, frauds, oppressions, sacriledges, and insolencies, or pievishness, and other enormities. Let such turn their eyes homewards other-whiles, observe how their own Pulses beat, and go learn what that is. Thou Hypocrite, cast out first the beam out of thine own eye. Believe it, we shall never grow to Christian unanimity in any tolerable measure, whilest this censorious spirit reigns in us, and while we do not chiefly imploy our care and endeavour in reforming our selves. This, I think, well practised, would conduce much to this speaking the same things, and the healing of divisions amongst us. So would it,

4. Cor. 10.
13, 14.

m Eccl. 10.
4.

4. If we would keep our selves in our own Stations, and labour to do God service in the Places and Callings wherein he hath set us, and not ἀλλοτριον πειρασθῆναι use our selves in other mens matters, which, as the Apostle speaks, are ἀμικτα unsuitable to us, and without our measure (1). By this one thing hath the Church of Rome caused a great Schism in the Christian World, because she doth υπερκτείνην stretch her self above her measure, and not content her self with that degree which belongeth to her. It is excellent counsel of Solomon, not only in a case he there put, but in divers others: (m) If the Spirit of the Ruler rise up against thee, leave not thy place. *E sede itio*, may with a little heat turn into *sed itio*, saith Doctor Reynolds. *Quidam in corpore Christi oculi quidem manus*, saith S. Basil: All are not eyes and hands in the Body of Christ, to take upon them the burden of great affairs. Are all Apostles, saith S. Paul? are all Prophets? are all Teachers? hath not God dealt to every man a several measure? hath he not placed every man in a several order? have we not all work to do in our own places? must we needs rush into the labours, and intrude

intrude our selves into the business of other men? *Hæc magistro relinquat Aristoteli, canere ipse docet.* It was a sharp rebuke of *Tully* against *Aristoxenus* the Musitian, who would needs turn Philosopher: whereunto agreeth the Answer of *Basil* the Great to the Clerk of the Emperours Kitchen, when he jeered him for his soundness against the Arrian Faction, *σὺν ἑστὶ τῶν ψυχῶν καρυίας φρονιζέιν.* Your business, it is to look to the seasoning of your Broth, and not to revile the Doctrine or Doctrines of the Church. All these do commend the Apostles Exhortation unto you, let every one study to be quiet, to do his own business. * The Connexion more * 1 Thef. 4.11. than intimates, the next way to be quiet abroad, is to be busie at home: We shall never learn well to be quiet, unless we learn also to keep our own business. The excellent Bishop *Lany* hath fully discovered, how guilty of the contrary hereof are both the Pope, the Covenanter, and Sectary, in his Sermon on this Text, *Quietness is the natural and genuine effect of orderly keeping in our Callings, and Stations, and our own business.* For all discord must be between two, either persons, or parties; and that which commonly kin-

See Doct.
Lany, Bi-
shop of E-
ly, upon
this Text:

dles the Fire is envy, or some supposed injury. Now he that minds his own business only, can give no occasion to others, of either envy or complaint; and so in recompence of keeping to his own business, he shall sit quietly under his own Vine, and under his own Fig-tree. Let none of us then out of ambition, discontent, emulation, or any other Polipragmatical distemper, grow weary of our own imployments, and interpose our selves in things that are without, and above our order: But according to the

1 Cor. 7. 24. Apostles rule, (*n*) Let every one abide in his calling, and keep the station wherein God hath set him, and this will be an excellent help to our speaking the same things, our unity, unanimity, and uniformity, and that there be no divisions amongst us.

8. To this add also: Remember that *σωφροσύνη* enjoined by the Apostle (*o*),

m 12. be wise unto sobriety. When you are to deal with things divine, set bounds to your selves, that you break not through to gaze (*p*): think not to draw every thing in Religion to the rule of your own crooked presumptuous Reason, to give a *quoniam* of every thing in Faith! Upon

p Exod. 17. 12-21.

this

this account it is that S. Paul charges the *Colossians* (q), to take heed of Philosophy, and vain deceits; not but that there is admirable use of sound Philosophy, and of Reason raised and rectified, so long as it is subordinate to Faith: but when Reason shall be so proud as to judge of Faith it self, and admit or reject it, as it shall be consonant or disagreeing to her prejudice, this is a Tyranny which will quickly overthrow all: Other cause than this there hath been none of the desperate Heresies wherewith the *Socinians* have pestered the World, but that they will have all truths to stand or fall at the Tribunal of their presumptuous Reason. Happy we, and the Church of God, if all curious Novelties in sacred things be esteemed profane: Modesty becomes Christians, especially *cum de Deo agitur*, as *Seneca* said; be we wise to sobriety: This would confer much to our speaking the same things, and to take away divisions from amongst us; and of this advice the two next will be a full explanation and improvement. So let that be the

9. Ἀναλογία πρὸς αὐτοὺς, keep your selves close to the form of sound words (r). Rom. 12.

G. 3

Thos. 2 Tim 1.

13.

Those words and Doctrines which accord best with the grounds of Faith and love in Christ, those which ascribe most glory to God, and the Grace of God, and which most conduce to the humbling and abasing of the pride of man, which most tends to the practice of godliness, to the purifying of Conscience, and edifying of the Body of Christ. It is a weighty saying of S. Austin (s), *Non parum interest ad Christianam pietatem quibus vocibus utamur*: It is of no little moment to Christian Piety what words we use; they must be according to godliness (t), and our knowledge, the knowledge of the truth according to godliness. To which add

f De Civ.
Dei lib. 10.
c. 23.

r 1 Tim. 6.
3.

n Aust. ep.
28.

10. ΣΥΝΘΗΚΑ, Be sure to retain and bear reverence to the customs of the Church o^r God: *Contra fundatissimum morem nemo sentiat* (u): Let no man be in love with his private sentiments, contrary to the Churches well-grounded Customs. *Nemo nobis molestias exhibeat sic enim sentit ac docet Sancta Dei Ecclesia ab origine.* Epiphan. in Anchorat. Let no man trouble us in these things, for thus the Holy Church thought and taught from the beginning. *In quibus nihil certi statuit Scriptura*

tura mos populi Dei & instituta majorum pro lege tenenda sunt, saith S. Austin; *

*A known place.

Where the Word of God determines no certainty, and where there is no express and evident variation from Divine Authority, there must be the Customs and received practices of the Ancient and pure Ages of the Church, and Constitutions of her Pastors, be retained as a Law, and to condemn and oppugn them, he somewhere calls it *insolentissima insania*, a most proud or insolent madness; only this Rule must be qualified with this necessary limitation, that no Authority hath any Authority in matters of Faith, Worship, or Doctrine of Religion, to prescribe or deliver any thing, as in it self, and immediately obligatory to Conscience, which is either contradicted or omitted in the Word of God; for that we believe to be fully sufficient to make the man of God perfect, and thoroughly furnished to every good work (x); but as for matters

x 2 Tim. 3, 15, 17.

accessary, of indifferency, order, decency, and inferiour nature, and in matters of testimony to the truths of Scripture, and for manifesting the succession, flourishing, and harmony of Doctrine, through all Ages of the Church, the godly Learned

Vide *Lit-
tler's Re-
formed
Presbyte-
rian, Hook-
er's Eccle-
siastical
Polity, Mr. Bax-
ter's Dispu-
tation
with sever-
al other
Authors.*

* *Cal. Inst.*
lib. 1. cap.
10. Sect. 30

y *Job 8. 2.*
z *Jer. 6. 16.*
a *Mat. 19. 8*

b *1 Cor.*
11. 16.

hath ascribed much to the Authority and
usage of the Ancient Churches, the stu-
dy of the Doctrine whereof, the Learn-
ed *Usher* calls a Noble Study: And that
the Church both have had a constant use
of such Customs, and right to make and
impose them, I could largely shew, by
the judgment of all Reformed Divines,
Ancient and Modern; *Eeza, Bucer, Zuin-
glius, Chrimenitius, P. Martyn*, and *Calvin*
himself saith, that such Customs as serve
for the furtherance of Devotion, are not
purely Humane, but Divine: * Sure I
am, that we should retain and observe
them, seems to be enjoined by Scriptures.
Inquire of the former time, saith *Bildad*,
and prepare thy self to the search of their
Fathers (y). Look the old way, saith
the Prophet (z). It was not so from the
beginning, saith our Saviour (a). And
what a high valuation *S. Paul* sets upon
the Customs of the Church, appears by
his arguing (b): If any man seems to be
contentious, we have no such Custom,
neither the Churches of God: He is there
reproving the *Corinthians* Innovation of
Women praying uncovered, and men co-
vered. This ill fashion *S. Paul* confuteth
with several reasons, drawn from the
power

power of Man over his Wife, appealing also to natural decency therein; and at last concludes with this close, that they could alledge no such Custom in Gods Churches, and to run counter to the Universal practice of Christianity, is a note of contentiousness, if any man seem, &c. Now if a Church-Custom carried weight with it in S. Paul's time, when among Christians, it could not be of above forty years standing, what a Reverence is due then to those Customs that are continued in Gods Church ever since it was gathered; which are like *Melchisedechs* (c), without Father, without Mother, c Heb. 7-3. or without dissent, whose first original cannot be found out? which began at the first, or near the first, and so should in all reason, and good manners, be continued till the last coming of our Saviour.

* The great Objection I know is, that these Customs and Ceremonies enjoined, are an impeachment of our Christian Liberty; but methinks to scruple at them, and hazard the Churches Peace, and our Superiours displeasure for them, should rather impeach our Liberty indeed, especially considering that they are not urged as obligatory to Conscience, *per se*, in them-

* See this well answered in Dr. Edw. Stirlingfleet's *Irenicum*, page 56.

themselves, but only as they are imposed by Lawful Authority, for Orders sake. And whatever such are commended by the Churches Customs, or our Superiours Commands, or convenient circumstances, our Christian Liberty consists in this, that we have leave to do them; and our refusing to comply with these, can hardly proceed from any thing better, than a proud affectation of singularity, or at best a superstitious scrupulosity in us. Sure I am the Apostle implicitly brands it with contention; and therefore to submit to them, and retain and observe them, it is an excellent way to this speaking the same things, and that there be no divisions amongst us.

d James
2. 1.

e 1 Cor. 7.
23.

II. To this end also I exhort you to an ἀπεριτολημία, a not having the Faith of God with respect of persons (*d*): Take heed of partiality, or making yourselves the servants of men (*e*), an enthralling your judgments to the fancies of any Sect or Party, but rather call to bear an equal affection to Truth and Piety by whomsoever it be professed; for Truth and Piety is Gods, wheresoever it grows, as a Mine of Gold or Silver is the Princes, in whose ground soever it be
disco-

discovered: *ὑποσώτοις χριστιανισμὸς ἀλλὰ πῶς
κατακλινέσται.* The contrary to this is
as great an occasion of divisions as any I
know of. It was *S. Austin's* complaint of
the *Donatists* in his time: if one came a-
mongst them, and assured them of his Re-
ligion, *Christianus sum*; that he was Bap-
tized, *fidelis sum*; that he lived in the
Churches Peace, *Catholicus sum: Christianus,*
fidelis, Catholicus, all would not
serve the turn to be embraced by them:
an Unity with Christians in his Catholick
Church would not do it, he must hold
of another head, or else be no Saint: *Donatus*
his Ear-mark must be set upon him,
or he be rejected. It is the very case this
of the dividers of this Age; be a man
never so good a Christian, never so pious
or peaceable, damned he is, to hell he must
go, if he joyn not himself to a Side and
Faction, which by many is nick-named
their Friends, their Brethren (by way of
appropriation) the Godly, the Kingdom
of Christ, and the like. Every one is
partial to his own side he takes to, be-
yond all reason, ready to justifie them in
their most suspicious Enterprizes, and to
extenuate their most palpable excesses,
and as ready to misconstrue the most ju-
stifiable

f Pro. 17.
15.

g Jude 16.

stifiable actions of the adverse part; yea, to aggravate to the utmost their most pardonable and smallest aberrations; what is this but at once to justify the Guilty, and condemn the Innocent? either of which alone is an abomination unto the Lord (f). Hitherto appertains that which the Apostle calls, having mens persons in admiration (g); for there be many that have such a high Opinion of some men, that they are apt to receive whatsoever they deliver as the undoubted Oracles of God, though perhaps wanting both probability and proof: And on the other side, they have such a prejudice against some others, though perhaps of better worth, greater Learning, and more real Piety, and sounder judgment, as to suspect and disgust every thing that comes from them, (especially if it doth not *sapere ad pallatum*) let them lay down their Doctrine never so clearly, or prove it never so substantially. Thus partial affections to a Side, or to a Party, corrupts the judgments of men, and inclines them very naturally to divisions: And so long as men are thus carried away with such partialities and prejudice, they shall never rightly perform their duties either to
God

God or man. Now, I beseech you Brethren, let us otherwise learn Christ, let us content our selves with Christs Livery, and as such hear his Voice. We have our Faith and Appellation from Christ, not from any other person; let us not upon any these undue respects to any party of men, hold or let go Truth, or Piety, or Unity, and so make Merchandise of it; contrary to that of *Solomon*, (b) *Buy the Truth, and sell it not.* The ^{h Pro. 28.} Orthodox Believers in the Primitive ^{23.} Church, did ever keep themselves to the stile of *Antioch* Christians, refusing the Name of *Petrian* or *Paulian*, or *Pais Donati*, I am of *Paul*, or I of *Peter*, or I of *Donatus*: thus let us do, let us lay aside all dividing names and affections to any party, for those do naturally hinder us from speaking the same things, and do uphold divisions amongst us: Therefore laying aside all such partiality,

12. Let us all joyn our forces unanimously against the Common Adversary: Just as *David* did, when his Brethren the *Jews* had provoked him much, yet could not he be stirred up to fight against them, but used all his skill and force against the *Philistines* (i). It is promised as a blessed ^{i 1 Sam. 17.7, 12.} fruit

fruit of the Gospel, which every godly man prayeth for, and desireth to see, that *the Wolf shall dwell with the Lamb, and the Leopard shall lye down with the Kid, and the Calf, and the young Lyon, and the Fatling be together, and a little Child shall*

¶ *Isay 11. lead them (k): That Ephraim and Judah shall cease to annoy and vex one another,*

¶ *1 Verse 13. (l) but all should fly upon the shoulders of the Philistines, and sport them of the East.*

O that we could see this day, that we could lay aside our civil enmities to joyn together against our common Adversaries; this would be an happiness upon earth, almost heavenly, if we could so speak the same things, that there were no divisions amongst us.

13. To this end let us follow peace joyntly, and the things that make for mutual peace and unity: Let each of us, in our severall places, not only have pious affections thereunto, but also put to all our skill and wisdom, and cast about for the most proper and seasonable means conducing to so good an end. *διωκμεν*. It is not enough for every one of us to accept it, or desire it, or meet it half way, or let it in, or welcom it when it comes, but we must prosecute, pursue, and go after it:

We

We must venture our selves for it to a *forte*, & *quantum in nobis*, if by any means we may overtake and apprehend it. Let peace and unity be our rule, not intangling our Consciences by scruples where we need not, taking the way that leads to the Land of Peace and Promise, not by Mount *Ebal*, by pride, and malice, and ambition, and Schismatical contentions, but by Mount *Gerizim*, by humility, and charity, and meekness, and unanimity, and piety. Thus let us do that we may all speak the same things, and that there be no divisions amongst us.

14. Yet when all those Rules are observed, except the Lord build the house, they labour but in vain that build it. *Paul* may plant, and *Apollo* may water, but his blessing is it which must perfect all. By all these convincing reasons and insinuations, we can but work upon your outward senses, and by the sense represent fit motives to your understandings: It is God only that can bow and frame your hearts to peace and unity; we may persuade to unity, unanimity, and uniformity, and some of you may wish it, but if the God of Peace do not set in with us, it will not take effect. *Non persuadebis etiam*

m Gen. 9.

amfi persuaseris, It is God that shall persuade *Japhet* to dwell in the House of *Shem* (*m*); *Noah's* persuasions will not do it, nor *Shem's*, though they should speak with the tongues of men and Angels: Let God persuade *Japhet*, and *Japhet* will be persuaded; God is a Lover of Concord, and the Author of Peace. Alas, without him, what can be expected from us, whose disposition, by reason of that pride that aboundeth in us, are naturally turbulent and self-willed. The heart of man is a four piece of Clay, wondrous stubborn and churlish, not to be wrought upon but by an Almighty Power. What man is able to take down his own pride sufficiently? (many a good man have more ado with this one Viper than with all other his corruptions besides:) but how much less is any man able to subdue and beat down the pride of another mans spirit? only God, with the strength of his Arm, is able to throw down every exalting thought, and to lay the highest Mountains level with the lowest Flats. It is he alone that can infuse a spirit into us, that will eat out, by degrees, that canker'd proud flesh, that breedeth all vexations and contentions;
He

He can subdue that self-love that is in every mans bosom, and make us so vile in our own eyes, that whereas we are naturally prone to esteem better of our selves than of all other men, we shall, through lowliness of mind, esteem every other man better than our selves (*n*): In vain ^{Phil. 2.3} shall we Wrestle with our own corruptions, though we put to all our strength, and wrestle with great wrestlings; as *Jacob* said upon the birth of *Nephtali* (*o*), ^{Gen. 30.8} so long as we wrestle with them only. We must therefore to the use of all other means, a joynt-obedience to agreed truths, moderation of zeal wherein we differ, humility, reflecting our censures and zeal upon our selves chiefly, keeping within our Callings; sobriety, closeness to the form of sound words, and the Churches Customs; impartiality, uniting against the common Adversary, and following peace by all means. To them all we must add our wrestlings with the Almighty (as *Jacob* did) by our importunate and uncessant prayers, for this blessing of Peace and Unity. Pray for the Peace of *Jerusalem*, that he would repair the breaches, and build up the walls thereof; that he would give his Word of Peace a

H

free

free passage into the heads and hearts, into the consciences and conversations of all his people; that so we all speaking the same things, without divisions amongst us, may grow up together unto a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ; which the Lord grant for the merits and mercies of his beloved Son Jesus Christ the Righteous, to whom with the Father and the Blessed Spirit, three Persons, and one Immortal and only wise God, be all Glory, Praise, and Thanksgiving, now and for evermore. *Amen.*

F I N I S.

THE OBLIGATION OF CONSCIENCE

Not to forsake
PUBLICK ASSEMBLIES.

Hebrewes. 10. 25.

*Not forsaking the assembling of our selves
together, as the manner of some is.*

BEfore I close with my Text, give me leave to shew you in a few words, what great reasons I have to make choice of it, for the subject of my present discourse. These are three, My duty, Your necessity, and all Our comfort.

1. My duty in respect of the Church of God; as a Member, but especially as a Minister thereof. As a Member, for it is every Christians duty, to inform himself by the best meanes he can, how it fareth with the Church of God, but especially to

to take notice of, and be affected with the State of that particular Church, whereof he is an immediate member. Men are most what too inquisitive of news, behold this is the news we should inquire after. When Gods people were in battel against the Philistines, and had the Ark of God with them in the Camp, it is said (a) that old *Eli*, sate upon a seat in the way side watching and hearkning, how Gods people sped; and the reason is given for *his heart trembled, for the Ark of God*, therefore he sate watching, that he might hear what became of it. So when there came one to *David* out of the Camp of *Israel* (b) *David* was very inquisitive how it fared with the Lords host: *How went the matter* (saith he) *I pray thee tell me*. The like you see in *Nehemiah*, (c) so soon as *Hanani* came to him, the first question he asked him, was concerning the state of Gods people that dwelt at *Jerusalem*, though he wanted nothing himself being a Courtier in great place and favour, with that mighty King, yet could he not but inquire of, and be affected with the state of Gods people. Nay *Moses* being in the height of honour in *Pharaohs* Court did not onely inquire, but went out to his brethren

a 1 Sam. 4.
13.

b 2 Sam. 1.
3-4.

c Neh. 1. 2.

brethren and looked on their burdens (d), ^{d Exodus,}
 All these examples teach us that it is our ^{2. 11.}
 duty, as to inform our selves about, so
 to consider the burdens of Gods Church,
 and be affected with the miseries thereof,
 and every one in our several places, to
 have a care of the cause of Religion in the
 world, and especially we ought continu-
 ally to importune the Lord in behalf there-
 of, and never forget it in our prayers to
 God. Ye that have escaped the sword (e) ^{e Jeremiah}
stand not still remember; the Lord afar off, ^{51. 50.}
and let Jerusalem come into your mind.
 Ye that are the Lords remembrancers, saith
 the Prophet *Esay* (f) *keep not silence, and* ^{f Isai. 62.}
give him no rest, till he establish, and till ^{67.}
he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth.
 Jerusalem is like to become a reproach, an
 hissing to the world more and more, if
 things go on as they do, but we there-
 fore that are the Lords Solicitors and Re-
 membrancers, (as all the Faithful are)
 should (like the importunate Widdow in
 the Gospel) give him no rest, till he have
 established and settled his Church in truth
 and peace, and so give them beauty and
 glory, even in the sight of their enemies, so
 did *Nehemiah* (g) *he sate down and wept* ^{g Nche. 14.}
and mourned certain dayes, and fasted and
prayed

Exodus.
17. 11.

prayed for the Churches miseries, by this means he had wonderful success in his suite to the King in their behalf. So might we the poorest and meekest of us all, help Gods Church very much, and prevail with God and against her enemies, if we would so cry, and weep, and pray before God for her. (b) When *Moses* held up his hands *Israel* prevailed, and when he let his hands fall, *Amalek* prevailed, Alas our hearts and hands are heavy in prayer and therefore doth *Amalek* prevail so much as he doth, and *Israel* receiveth so many foiles, and is afflicted with so many successions of miseries. Such is the duty then of every Christian, much more it is of every Minister of the Church, as to inform himself about, and to be affected with, so unceasingly to pray for it, yea and to prayer to joyn all his indeavours to rebuke and oppose all the enemies thereof, secret or open, whether they be without or within the Church: it is no standing a neuter in the holy wars of Gods people. He that is not with the Church to assist her, to the utmost of his power, is against it. *Meroz* is to be cursed that will not come out to the help of the Lord and his servants against the mighty.

The

The zeal of Gods servants was alwayes stirring and active to stop any Schismatics or Hereticks that did in any Age rise up in and against the Church of God. When in the Church of *Corinth*, there did but spring up a contention about so mean a ceremony as coming and uncovering their heads in prayer; (a very inconsiderable ceremony in comparison) yet he that was ever ready to become all things to all men, that by all means he might win some, did then bestir himself by all means to oppose them in their presumptuous violations of the customs and orders established in their Churches, though it was but in and about indifferent things (i) such is the duty then of every Christian member, much more of every Minister of the Church of God, and so is it my duty in particular as to take notice of and pray against, so as much as lieth in me to oppose all the Church enemies and that's one reason why I choose this text, *Not forsakeing, &c.* And as my duty engageth me to this choice, so, 2. Your necessity, for there is none of you all, but you have great need to be well grounded in matters of the Churches Peace, and Unity, as well as, in any other points of Religion, else will you be in continual danger

b Judges 5.
23.
a Text
strangely
urged in the
late Civil
wars
against neu-
trality and
lukewarm-
ness by those
who hate us
now impla-
cably if we
be not mode-
rate now,
as they call
it, that is
careless of
the Church-
es welfare.

i 1 Cor. 12.

16,

danger of being seduced, and so falling
 from your Baptism and Christian Profes-
 sion; either on the right hand or on the
 left. For there are abundance of false Pro-
 phets gone out into the world, never was
 Satan more let lose; never was there
 greater Swarms of Locusts issuing out of
 the bottomless pit, never was the Church
 more pestered with Schismes and Heresies;
 never was there more broachers and fo-
 mentors of them; and these as they are
 most diligent, lying in wait to deceive,
 they'll Compass sea and land to gather pro-
 felytes, so have they all necessary artifices
 and tricks of subtilty in order to that end
 4 Col. 2. 4. they have *παιδαγωγίας* (*k*) *enticing words*
 to beguile poor souls, and *κρυβεῖαν πανουργίας*
 1 Eph. 4. 14. *maskings* (*l*) *sight and cunning craftiness*
 whereby they lie in wait to deceive; they
 have a great deal of cunning even such
 as chears and cogs at dice do use, much
 craft to beguile and circumvent them that
 they deal with, there is no safety in giving
 them the least audience, or having any
 thing to do with them, for these seducers (as
 our experience teacheth us, and Gods spirit
 hath often admonished us) have a notable
 vaine of perswading, being able to use
 many reasons that at first sight, carry in
 them

them great probability, and *shew of truth*:
 hence it is that many there be who have
 at first wondered at the gross absurdities
 in a contrary Religion, and have thought
 them such as might be answered by any
 simple man, and so have scorned and ab-
 horred them, that yet by being over con-
 fident of themselves, and careless in inter-
 taining familiarity with those Seducers,
 have quickly been overborn and fallen in-
 to the pit of damnable errors, such need
 there, is Beloved, for every one to ground
 themselves carefully in the knowledg of the
 truth, as that they may not be so easily
 turned out of the *right way*, but may
 make *straight paths for their feet*, that they
 may go *steadily* and strongly in it, (m) Alas
 they that are Children in understanding
 and wavering, they are easily carried away
 with every wind of vain Doctrine (n), and
 the most pernicious and damnable sedu-
 cers, do easily prevail with simple women,
 that are ever learning, and never able to
 come to the knowledge of the truth, (o) they
 daily beguile unstable souls, (p) So great is
 your need then to be rightly informed
 in the knowledg of the truth, and to be
 well grounded in your religion, least you
 be unaware seduced to error and destructi-

Self-confi-
 dence sel-
 dome stands
 firmly in a
 day of tryal
 witness Pe-
 ter at Chr-
 sts appre-
 hension-

m Heb. 12.
 13.

n Ephes. 4.
 14.

o 2 Tim. 3.
 6, 7.

p 2 Peter.
 2. 14.

on, and that's another reason of my choosing the Text, *Not forsaking, &c.*

3. Another reason, it is in order to all our joy and comfort, for the fullness of our Church Assemblies, and if men could be dissuaded from forsaking them, it could not but be matter of great joy and comfort to every truly pious heart. Such a one cannot but rejoyce in the frequency and fullness of the publick Assemblies of the Church, and in the Prosperity of the true Religion, and right worship of God. How marvellously did Gods people rejoyce in the dayes of *David*, when the Ark of God was brought to *Jerusalem* (q). And in the dayes of *Hezekiah* when the sacrament had been celebrated according to its first institution, which it had not been of a long time before (r), So when *Nehemiah* had purged the house and worship of God from the corruptions thereof, and restored it to it's primitive purity, It is said (s) *the people rejoyced with great joy, their wives also and their children rejoyced, so that the joy of Jerusalem was heard even a far off.* And in *Ezra*, (t) *all Gods people shouted with a great shout, when they praised the Lord, because the foundation of the house was laid.* so *David* to aggravate the misery of his present

q 1 Chr. 15.
28.

r 2 Chr. 5.
26, 27.

s Neh. 12.
v. 43.

t Ezra 3.
11.

sent estate (*v*) he speakes of the joy and comfort, he formerly took in going to the house of God with a multitude of them that kept holy day. And in that great joy the people of God had at the celebration of the passover in *Hezekiahs* time. This is exprest for one cause thereof, that the number of the communicants was so great (*w*) *for there Assembled to Jerusalem much people, to keepe the passover a very great congregation.* On the other side the faithful and truly pious have ever grieved to hear or see that the Assemblies of the Church are unfrequented or neglected, or that any false or Schismatical worship, or congregations were set up in stead thereof. Old *Eli* was much more afflicted for takeing a way of Gods arke then for the slaughter of the people, or for the death of his own two Sons *Hophni* and *Phinehas* (*x*), in like manner, the Holy Ghost noteth of his daughter in law, that being in extremities of her pain and anguish, it would never out of her mouth while breath was in her body, *that the glory was departed from Israel, for the ark of God was taken away* (*y*), so was it this that troubled that zealous man of God *Elijah*, and made him weary of his life (*z*),

v Psal 42.
w 2. Chro.
 30. 26.

x 1 Sam 4:

17.

y 1 Sam. 4.

22.

¹ Kings 19.
10. *The children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, saith he (that is, they are fallen from thy holy Religion) they have thrown down thy holy altars, (that is, they have abolished, and shown, contempt and hatred to thy holy worship) and why should I then desire to live any longer in such a time? And for the Eclipse of Church Assemblies, we have a notable expression (a) I will gather them saith the Lord that are sorrowful for solemne Assemblies, who are of thee to whom the reproach of it was a burden: in which Text we may observe five things.*

^a Zeph. 3.
18.

^b Z. 6. 1. 8.
19.

1. That it was one of the greatest sorrowes of Gods people, in their captivite, that they then wanted their solemne Assemblies; doubtless they might have then some Religious meetings for Gods worship, (yea they had publique fasts then four times a year as appears (b)) yet their Assemblies was nothing so solemne, or so populous, as they was want to be at *Jerusalem*, that was their grief.

^c Lam. 1. 7.

2. The Caldeans their enemies was want to reproach them for this, and to say to them to this effect, *where are your solemne Assemblies now (c) they did mock at their Sabbaths, they rejoyced and reproached over them, because they could have no such Assemblies*

Assemblies as they was wont to have, just as many wicked ones do now mock at our Churches, and their ministers, because people (having the reins loosed) may without fear forsake the publique Assemblies, to erect private conventicles for themselves, and do what they list as some can lay to our very faces now.

3. The Text saith *this was a burden to Gods people, to have this reproach cast upon them*, as it is certainly to every true Protestant and godly man, to hear of the separatists insolent taunts to the congregations of the Church and the ministers thereof.

4. Of these that were so sorrowful for the solemn Assemblies, the Lord saith to his Church these are of thee, they are natural & kindly children of the true Church, that do stand thus affected.

5. To them he doth make a promise, I will gather them, saith the Lord: I will have a special respect to them, and though they be scattered and dispersed, not one of them shall be lost, but *I will bring them back again to their one Land. I will gather them*, saith the Lord, *that are sorrowful for the solemn Assemblies who are of thee, to whom the reproach of it, was a burden.* Indeed

it

it is a burden to every one that hath a true love and zeal of God in him, to see Religion suffer the least ecclipse in any kind, in any place, to lose any thing of that lustre of purity, sincerity or power, that once it had. Hence when the foundation of the Temple was laid, under *Zorobabel*, Gods people that had seen no better rejoyced in it: but the Priests, and *Levites*, and chief of the fathers, who were Ancient men, that had seen the first house, *they wept with a loud voice, while the rest shouted for joy (b)*. why? O it grieved their hearts, to see how far short that house, which God was now to have, came short in beauty and glory, of that that God had had before in *Jerusalem*. For as much then as it is every ones duty especially the ministers, to consider the State of the Churches and especially that of which they are members, and ministers, to be affected with them, and to pray for them, and by all means to oppose the enemies thereof. And there is none of us, but stand in great need to be well grounded in these points that relate to the Church, least we be seduced by the cunning and diligence of seducers, that are abroad in the world, and all our comfort will be augmented, if by the light of

b z. a. 3
12.

reason, and Gods word preached from
 Texts (as this I have read) we can
 prevent the Apostacy of any from the
 Church, and can discover the wickedness
 of those that are dayly forsaking the As-
 semblies thereof. And it cannot but be
 matter of greatest grief to the truly godly
 to see the solemne Assemblies neglected,
 unfrequented, or private congregations
 erected in opposition unto them. All
 these particulars shew I have great reason
 to make choice of the Text and such like
 unto it, till I have so fully discharged my
 duty and discovered the mind of God out
 of the Scriptures about it, that I may leave
 the forsaking of our Church assemblies in-
 excusable, so that they can never plead Ig-
 norance of their duty and sin, and that I
 may say *liberavi animam meam*, I have deli-
 vered mine own soul. To this end and
 purpose have I pitched on the Text.

*Not forsaking the Assembling of our
 selves together, as the manner of some
 is.*

For the coherence of the Text, I
 shall wish you to look no further back
 then the 22 verse. For the Apostle haveing
 in the former part of the Chapter shewn
 them, that the Sacrifice of Christs body ,
 K 4 which

which he once offered, hath for ever taken away sin. He presseth thence a double exhortation. The first in 22 verse *let us draw near to God*, how? even in and through Christ, *with a true heart and full assurance of faith*, &c. And the Second is in the 23 verse. *Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering*: that is, this Doctrine of Christ sacrificed and the merits thereof; The truth we have received from Christ, let us avow it, and not in time of tryal upon any condition forsake it. Now this exhortation he strengtheneth, by giving of directions, for furthering their obedience thereunto: the first is, Christians mutually stirring up, and sharpening one another amongst themselves; that is a special help to constancy in the true Religion, and a preservative against Apostacy, together with a godly striving one with another, who shall be first in love and well-doing: vers. 24. *Let us consider one another to provoke to love and good works*. And,

2. Another means to this end, is the frequenting Christian congregations & assemblies. So comes in my Text. *Not forsaking* &c. In the words you have evidently two parts.

2. A Taxation of some for the neglect of that duty.

1. The duty is to keep close to, and not to forsake the Assemblies of the Church.

2. The fault taxed in some amongst them is, that in Schism, or pride, or purpose of Apostacie they withdrew themselves from these Church assemblies, and so fell back again, or were in the way of falling back, to the open denial of Christ : for separation from the true Church, or the Christian society of the faithful therein, is a remarkable sin, tending to lead men by Schism to Apostacy, from the profession of the true faith.

1. Of the duty of Christians in order to their proving constant in the true Religion : even to keep close unto, and not forsake the assemblies of the Church. The word for assemblies in the Text hath a very great emphasis in it, it is a tricomposite *ἐκσυμμεριζω* the preposition *ἐν* as both *Calvin* and *Hemingsius* upon the place observe signifies *novam accessionem*, an increase or addition of some more members to a body congregated, And these were the converted Gentiles, that being converted to the faith became one with the Jews one and the same body of Christ. *Estius* observes,

observes, that because the Apostle here writes to the Jewes, therefore, for the Christian Assemblies he useth the word Synagogue, because he would not vary from their phrase or custome of Speech any more then needs. But might it not be some private meetings? some separate assemblies in a corner that he calls by this name, and here speaks of? O no, Interpreters with one consent, generally interpret it of the publique assemblies of the Church in such publique places, as are by Christian Magistrates, or by the Rulers of the Church, if the Magistrates be not Christian, appointed for the publique worship of God. *Not forsaking the Assembling of themselves,* that is, saith the *London Annotations* the publique congregation of the faithful, wherein the word of God is taught, the sacraments administred, and common prayer and publique Thanksgiving are offered up unto God; for unto such publique congregations hath God promised his blessing: where hath he promised it? Marke, the Scriptures quoted by the Assembly for it are these (d) *one thing have I desired of the Lord that I might dwell in the house of the Lord all the dayes of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his holy*

psal. 27. 4.

holy Temple ; for herein is implied this promise, that in the Temple, the house of God, there will God let us see his beauty.

Another text quoted by them is (e) *I was glad, when they said let us go into the house of the Lord, our feet shall stand within thy gates,* O Jerusalem, *thither the tribes go up, the tribes of the Lord, unto the testimony* Psal. 122. 1.

of Israel to give thanks unto the name of the Lord. Of such assemblies therefore, even

of such as go into the said House of God, whither the tribes, the Multitude of the right worshippers of God, go up to pray unto, and praise him, of these doth our Text speak. *Not forsakeing the assembling*

&c. And to these Assemblies the *Annotat-*

tions quote that special promise, as belonging unto them (f) *Where two or three are met together in my name,* that is, for pray- f Mat. 20.

er and other Religious offices, there am I

in the midst of them. Christ promiseth his

gracious assistance to, and presence with his

Church be it great and numerous, or be it

small, and with the publique and solemn

congregation thereof. Yes, say the Schis-
maticks, where ever two or three are met to-
gether there is he in the midst of them, there-
fore the promise is to us, or any of the
Saints, wherever, or how few soever they
be

be that thus meet together. There is no Text wherein the separatist take Sanctuary more then this, but very unsoundly. For as the Reverend Mr. *Ball* expounds that place (in his tryal of the grounds tending to separation) pag 280 , by the context it appears Christ is there speaking of the Validity of the sentence of excommunication, and certainly Christs meaning is not that every Society that consisteth of two or three believers met together to pray or preach, have the power to excommunicate : for no one example can be Alledged out of Scripture or Ecclesiastical History of the ancient Churches, wherein any number of the Faithful, did ever lawfully excommunicate or judg any Member of their Society, without their Guides and lawful Officers, moderateing the action. There is no promise can be shewed out of Holy Writ, wherein any such authority is bequeathed to two or three private Believers, Disciples or Brethren. O, no, but the very tenour of the words is to argue from the less to the greater thus, If Christ be present with two or three gathered together in his name to ask things agreeable to his will , he will much more confirmin heaven what ever his officers and servants that have power from Christ
to

to do this service in the Church in his name shall determine and conclude according to his will: but they cannot meet together in his name, for this or any other holy office, that meet together in way of Schism, contrary to his will, *Quomodo possunt duo aut tres in nomine Christi colligi quos constat à Christo & ab ejus Ecclesiâ seperant*, saith S. Ciprian, how can they be met together in the name of Christ that do manifestly separate themselves from Christ and his Church. *Cum Hæreses & Schismata nata sint, dum conventicula sibi diversa constituunt veritatis caput & originem reliquerunt*, when Heresies and Schismes arise, & the maintainers of them make separate conventicles for themselves, they forsake Christ the Lord and fountain of Truth & peace. It is the Church and they that keep within the pale of the Church by unity and concord to whom this promise runs to give them, what, they meet together in his name to ask of him, and to be in the midst of them *I will be*, saith he, *in the midst of them*, That is, of them that fear me, and keep my precept of peace and truth, *Non homines ab ecclesia dividit, qui fecit, & instituit ecclesiam, sed exprobrans discordiam perfidis, & fidelibus pacem suâ voce commendans, ostendit magis esse se cum duobus aut tribus unanimitèr orantibus quàm cum decedentibus pluribus*

De Unitate
Ecclesie as
I find him
quoted by
Doct. For-
bes in his
Irenicum.

*pluribus, plusque impetrari posse paucorum
concordi prece quam discordi multorum o-
ratione.* Saith S. Cyprian (g) Surely our
Saviour doth not by this promise, warrant
divisions from that Church, which he
himself hath made and gathered, but ra-
ther upbraiding the contentions of the
perfidious, and commending unity and
unanimity to the faithful, he teacheth us
that he will rather be with two or three
of them met together with one accord in
his name, and according to his appoint-
ment, then with multitudes of them that
depart from them, and that he will rather
answer the uniform prayers of a few peace-
able believers, then the jarring prayers of
many that divide themselves into sides
and factions. Can they think that Christ
will be in the midst of them, that are met
together out of the Church of Christ? Nay
though such should suffer Martyrdom in
the confession of his name, yet cannot that
blot and stain of their Schism be washed a-
way in their blood, *Inexpiabilis & gravis
culpa discordie nec passione purgatur*, the
great and inexpressible fault of separation
and dissention cannot be purged by the most
bitter passion or suffering, *Esse martyr
non potest qui in ecclesia non est*, he cannot
be

be a true martyr that keeps not unity in the Church, *Ad regnum pervenire non poterit qui eam qua regnatura est, derelinquit.* He cannot attain the Kingdome, that forsakes her, that must raige in it. It was peace that Christ gave us and bequeathed unto us. It is concord and unanimity that he hath commanded us. He hath strictly enjoined us to keep the covenants of love and Charity pure and inviolate. So that he can never prove a right Martyr for the truth that keeps not Charity with the brethren. (h) *though I have faith so as to remove mountains, or bestow all my goods upon the poor, or give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth nothing.* God himself is love, and therefore they that break the bond of love, can never have God. God cannot be in the midst of them; so that it is not to private conventicles that this promise runs, but to the publique congregations of the Church of which my Text here speaks. *Not forsakeing the Assembling of your selves as the manner of some is.* My way being thus clear, and the meaning of the Text being thus made out and explained, I shall from what is said, raise this observation and prosecute it.

h 1 Cor.
12 2.

That it is the undoubted duty of all pious Christians,

Doct :

Christians, that desire to prove constant to the true Religion to frequent and not to neglect the publique Assemblies of the Church. Which truth that I may prove undenyable and convince the judgments of all that are teachable, and will not stop their ears against the truth, I will proceed in these gradual propositions,

Prop.

The First shall be the furthest off, but the foundation of all the rest, taken from the end of Religious Assemblies; even this, That God is to be worshiped: Adorability is due and proper unto God. There is such infinite absolute perfection in the divine nature, as necessarily calls for religious worship at the creatures hands, with this truth our blessed Saviour repelled that great temptation of the Devil to fall down and worship him (*i*), *It is written thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him onely shalt thou serve.* This worship is due unto God, and is due unto God only, for he alone is qualified with those properties, and attributes, *omniscience, omnipresence, omnipotence, &c.* that are necessary to make a being Adorable, & so with him no creature can claim a partnership in divine Adoration and religious worship, without great Sacriledg, nor can any be given to it, without

*i Mat. 4.
103*

our gross and abominable Idolatry? by this are the Papists therefore convinced of grievous Idolatry, in that they worship those things with a religious worship, which are no proper objects thereof; as Images, and Saints, and the like. But I only name this Proposition, because it is alien from the Text, though the foundation of all that is to be said of it.

Those from whom this worship is due unto *Prop* God, are all intelligent rational creatures, by the very obligation of nature. Indeed though there had never any been created by God to worship him, God had continued in his essential perfections as firm as ever. But being it was his good will to make the world, and rational creatures in it to adore him, there is therefore a natural obligation lying upon them, as his creatures, to worship him, and so, own their being, dependence, and preservation, as the product of their Creator's goodness: what can be more just and equitable than for a depending being to adore the fountain of his being, and of his both present and future welfare? or what higher piece of unreasonable injustice can there be, then for the creatures to slight him from whom they drew life, & breath, and all? In a word God hath indued Angels, and men especially, with minds

I.

and

and understandings for this very end, that they might know, honour, and adore him. He made all things, but them especially for himself, to do homage to him, and therein lies their natural obligation to serve and

Prop. 3.

worship him. As for pure spiritual beings, such as Angels are, they need not (being incorporeal) be circumstantiated, either to time or place in rendering this actual worship to God.

1. They are not tyed to any time, strictly so called, because their very nature is measured by Eternity, and not by time; and, being of a spiritual nature, they have neither those avocations, by any particular calling, nor necessary diversions from Gods worship, as man, if he had continued innocent, must have had, for the very sustaining of his life, and being, which would have been even in *Paradise*, by ordinary means, by seasonable food. It is therefore Probable they have no set times, but continue constant in the immediate worship of God, unless when God applyes them as πνεύματα λειτουργικὰ, as his ministering spirits for the service of his Church; and then perhaps their, even then employments, speaks them only distant from the other Angels, their fellow worshippers, and not absent

absent from the real worship & service of God.

3. Thus it appears they are not limited to any place neither, as they are not to any limited time of worship; for they being Spirits are incapable of any local circumscription: As for any further knowledge of the manner and circumstances of the Angels worshipping and adoring of God, Scriptures have a deep silence concerning it, and it is a learned Ignorance for us to sit down satisfied and contented without the knowledge of that which God hath thought unnecessary to be revealed, indeed to inquire any further thereinto, may run us upon the rock of bold and unsafe conjectures in those matters, the knowledge of which we may well spare, without the least prejudice of our present comfort, or our future salvation. So come we to the.

Though the Angels, being pure spiritual *Prop. 4.* beings, are not yet, the sons of men (being of a mixt nature partly Spirit, and partly Body) by their very beings are determined both to time and place, in their rendering to actual worship unto God. The very same reasons that do evince a necessity of worship to be given unto God, by such creatures as are partly body and partly spirit, will infer necessity of making time and place the inseparable adjuncts thereof.

41 cor. 6.
20.

1. Nature dictates clearly, that some time is necessary to worship God in. For man, being part body, and part spirit, is naturally obliged to worship God with both external and internal worship; to glorifie God both with body and spirit, which are his (4). Now all, especially external actions of man, must necessarily claim some time for the performance of them, nor can man conveniently set upon Gods worship unless some time be set a part, wherein he may be freed and disintangled, from his ordinary workes and inployments. Thus far time and worship seemes to fall under one and the same command; for as God in creating the world, did concreate time together with the world: so, when God commands any religious worship to be performed by men, he withal implicitey commands the necessary circumstance of some time, wherein it may be performed, and it being highly rational, that the disposal of that time should be at the pleasure of God; whose the worship is; therefore hath it pleased him to set a part some portion of our time, even a seventh part, when he might have required all, indulging us the rest, even the six parts to be imployed according to the necessity of our nature. Such is Gods infinite goodness
and

and condescension of love unto us, to allow us so large a portion of our time for our selves. And therefore they act most basely and dishonourably, not to say highly dishonourably against God, who grudge him so small a pittance, who would rob him of it, or by worldly employments or pleasures, drinking, or sports, or idleness prophane it.

2. Very light of nature also teacheth some place to be necessary for man to worship God in, because every body, such as man hath, must by the very necessity of its being, be contained in some real place, and indeed to be in a place, is so proper for a body, as we may as well suppose it not to have a being, as not to admit of a local circumscription; neither can a body be, nor exist, nor operate, nor perform any action, unless it be in some place, and therefore the worship of God being an external action necessarily require a place for it. So come I to this,

*These 4 first
propositions
may be seen
handled
more largely
by Dr. John
Stillings
fleet in his
Shenna.*

3. That worship that is due unto God from these rational Beings, the more publique it is the better it is: so you see I come near to the matter of my Text. I say the worship which is due unto God the more publique it is, the better it is, the greater and the more visible is the joynt concurrence and As-

Prop.

sembling together of several worshippers, for the performance of the same action of religious worship, the more acceptable it is to God. This appears by several considerations.

1. By Gods manifold precepts, both in the old and new Testament, injoyning several acts of publique worship; such were the commands of circumcision, and the solemn convocation, and ordinance of the Pascheover, under the Law, their several feasts, and their sacrifices, with the infinite rites appertaining to them, and the sundry precepts for Baptism and the Lords Supper, and publique Prayers, and confessions unto God, and collections for the poor, those sacrifices well pleasing unto God under the Gospel. These and others are outward visible publique acts of divine worship, required by God himself.

2. By publique performing of worship to God we stir up and mutually inflame each others zeal and devotion unto God, and so the more publique religious worship is, the more acceptable it is unto God, in respect of others. *St. Austin* in his confession saith, *that he was almost ravished with the Songs and Prayers of the Church & Congregation, so that the spiritual comfort, which he conceived by the sweet and heavenly*

heavenly matter, which then the Christians joyntly and orderly made, and in their publique Assemblies, made him weep for joy. And, I believe, there's scarce any Christian, but he hath sometimes felt his heart moved and affected towards God, in actions of publique worship, especially if uniformly and lively performed, more then at other times.

3. Publique worship is excellent, as publique, in respect of our selves, for our joyning in them is a badge of our profession; its a wearing of Gods livery; and confessing God before men, it shewes to all the world, that we are not ashamed to profess his word and Gospel, and our beliefe thereof, and obedience thereunto. And on the contrary our forsakeing the publique assemblies, where God is rightly and purely worshiped, borders upon a Apostacy, and is the next doore to denying of God, and our profession of Catholick Christianity.

4. It is excellent, as publique, in respect of God, for the more publique it is, the more it tends, to the honour and glory of God, being a publique testimony and acknowledgement of our dependence upon, and piety to him before all the world, as with the heart we believe, so with the mouth we make publique confession of God unto Salvation:

as we have light of grace within us, so hereby it shineth forth before men, that they may see our good works, and glorifie our Father in heaven. Christ tells us that a candle is not lighted to be put under a bushel. *Bono debetur manifestatio*, saith the Father, our good must be made manifest; therefore candles that have *bonum lucis* the goodness of light, must not be thrust, *Sub malo teuebrarum*, under the evil of darkness; So that if the candle of light be in our soules, that is, if we inwardly worship God in our hearts and spirits, we must set it upon a candlestick, our inward piety and worship must appear in our outward and publique worship of God before all the world.

5. The acception of publique worship with God above private, is *de facto*, notorious by manifest reason of the thing: particularly it is evident in publique prayer, for if the prayer of one righteous man can avail much, how much more will it when the prayers of many ascends up to the Lord. This must needs offer violence to the Kingdome of heaven, and *the violent shall take it by force*. Surely in every congregation there are some truly righteous, and their presence cannot but bring down mercies on those others whose prayers for themselves have no promise to be heard

heard *non aequè exoras quum solus Dminum ob-*
 secras, saith the Father. Thou dost not so soon
 obtain thy desire, when thou prayest alone,
 as when in the assemblies of the Brethren. for
 in those Assemblies there is some thing more
 then prayers even the concord, and consent, and
 joyning in Love and Charity, and the cry of
 the Priest, whose office it is, to make inter-
 cession for the people, and, being of the
 stronger size, to carry a long with them the weak
 prayers of the people, and carry them unto
 heaven, *Quod quis apud seipsum precatus acci-*
pere non poterit hec cum multitudine precatus
accipit. Quare? quia si non propria virtus ta-
men concordia multum potest. The thing that
 a man cannot obtain by himself alone, pray-
 ing together with the multitude he shall ob-
 tain, why? because when his own worth can-
 not, yet the concord and union of the Assem-
 bly may avail much. It is no reproach
 to call the Churches Liturgy Common prayer,
 the more common it is the better it is, and
 the more effectual; when, not onely two or three
 but a whole Congregation are joyned, nay,
 all the Congregations of a whole nation do
 in the same words put their Common petiti-
 ons and supplications, O what a shrill noise
 must this needs make in the ears of God. St.
 Jerom likened it to a thunder clap. St. Fasti

to the roaring of the Sea, it is like the several strings of a Well tuned instrument that makes a ravishing harmony, as the flame of one stick is nothing to that of a bundle on fire together, such is the devotion of one man to that of a whole Assembly, *vis unita fortior*, force united is so much the stronger, a three-fold cable is hardly broken. So do the joynt prayers of Gods people united, and publiquely put up unto God, move him as it were omnipotently and irresistably, they mount up to heaven, they rap at the gates and cannot easily be denyed entrance, like as the petition of a whole Corporation is more available to a King then the single petition of any particular person such is the power and profit of publique worship and devotion, And that by the way is a forceable argument to dissuade the truly Religious from forsaking the assemblies, that is the fifth Proposition, the more publique religious worship is, the better it is.

Prop. 6. The next in order is this. That divine worship may be truly publique. There is requisite the free and full assembling of our selves together in a publique place, let a part for the same. So you see I come home to my Text, so set it home upon your judgments and consciences with fulness of evidence, and strength

Strength of reason, as well as Holy Scripture. Give me leave to prosecute this Proposition by parts. To publique worship; to make it publique there is requisite the assembling of Minister and people in a publique place.

1. Of Minister. His presence is necessary, unless in case of unremoveable impediment, as some sudden sickness, or some weighty cause of absence; for he is a person set a part for the administration of Gods publique worship, he is consecrated to draw nigh unto God, he is by office an Ambassador or Messenger between God and man. Gods mouth, an Ambassador to the people, appointed to beseech them in Gods stead to be reconciled unto him. And he is the peoples mouth and Ambassador unto God, to offer up their requests for grace and mercy unto him. Gods mouth to them in preaching, and their mouth unto God in prayer. Hence (c) the Priests are required to put up petitions and supplications.

c Joel 2. 18.

Let the Priests, the Priest, of the Lord stand between the Porch and the Altar, and say spare thy people, good Lord spare them, And as under the Law it was the Priests office to burn incense, and Uzziah was smitten of God with a loathsome leproisie for usurping it. So still under the Gospel it is the Ministerial office to offer the Sacrifice of publique

Rom. 10.
10.

lique prayer unto God, which is as sweet smelling incense in the nostrils of God, and for preaching the word is express, how shall they preach unless they be sent, (d) how able so ever they be to teach the word and sound doctrine, yet if they have not a mediate and ordinary call or sending, which though it be by man, yet is divine, as *Luther* saith *they cannot preach to your profit, they come not to edifie but to destroy.* They are *Luthers* words. Let no uncalled speaker, Beloved, have any encouragement at your hands, having no mission from God. Our Saviour tells you, that what shew soever they make of holiness, and spiritualness, and godliness, and saintship, and the like, yet they are wolves in sheep cloathing, thieves spoiling Gods heritage, deceitful workers, undermining the truth, therefore take heed of them, or forlaking the publique assemblies, to run after them to your perversion and destruction, such is the first requisite to a publique worship, the *Ministers*, the rightly called *Ministers*, presence in the *Assembly*.

2. That publique worship may be publique indeed, the people ought to come and joyn in it, every one that would be saved must be member of the true Church for *extra ecclesiam non est salus* out of the true Church and Religion, no man can find assurance of comfort

fort and Salvation. *Japhet* cannot be saved
until perswaded to dwell in the tents of *Shem*,
nor *Noahs* family out of the Ark. The vi-
sible Church of Christ is a Congregation of
faithful men, in which the pure word of God
is preached, and the Sacraments are duly ad-
ministrated according to all those things that
are necessarily requisite for the same. A true
Church is chiefly to be distinguished from
a false by purity and soundness of doctrine,
and due administration of the Sacraments in it,
And surely these are unquestionable in our
Church of *England*, even in the confession of
our adversaries, as it stands at this day re-
formed from the dreggs of Popery in its do-
ctrine and worship. So then to this Church
let every one joyn himself, and not sepearate
from it, if he would be saved (e) *The Lord* e Acts 2. 47.
added to the Church such as should be saved.
Regia via. The King of heavens high way to
Salvation is, by adding to the Church not
by sepearating from it. If God be our Father
the Church is our Mother. (f) *Jerusalem* f Gal. 4. 26.
which is above, is the mother of us all. Hence
the Church is oft called the Kingdome of hea- g Mat. 13.
ven. (g) And that promise that is made (h) 44.
the people that dwells there, shall have their b Esa. 33.
sins forgiven, is to be understood of the ca- 24.
tholick Church, and so by consequence is ap-
plicable

1 Ephe. 4. 5.
1 Mat. 7. 13.

1 Jer. 32. 39.

plicable to every perticular visible Church that is a visible member of it. It is a damnable conceit of some, that a man may be saved in any religion. There is but one Faith, (1) one Way, one gate to life (4) And Gods promise is to call his Elect, that he will give them one heart and one way. (1) O then it stands men instead to consider diligently, which is the true standing Religion, and the true Church and every one must wait upon the Assemblies in that Church, that publique worship may be joyntly and publiquely offered unto God, all the people ought to come to the first part of worship, even the confession of sins, and to joyn therein, and in all the other parts of worship with the Minister, that they may be truly publique. Hence both the Jews and Gods People in all ages have understood themselves bound in all their Liurgick services to say *Amen* unanimously to the prayers and praises, they have put up to God. And we have cause to bless God that our publique worship in this nation is not (as the Papists would have it,) in a forreign language or strange tongue, but in our own tongue, intelligible to all, so that all the people may understandingly joyn in every part thereof and say *Amen*. Its a priviledge this, other nations

tions want; O that we would prize and improve it. So that's the second requisite to make worship publique, the peoples joyning unanimously with the Minister in it. These two make up the assembly, they are the persons that are to assemble, but where? this brings in a third.

3. Requisite to make Gods worship truly publique even a place fit, and known, and set a part for that purpose. The assembling of our selves together must be in a publique place, God by his instituted Law, did particularize and set a part to his people some places for his publique worship, and service: Paradise it selfe was a place designed not onely for innocent *Adam terram* but *Deum colere*, not onely to till the ground thereof, but also to worship God in it. And the place where *Adam* and his family had their residence after they was driven out of Paradise, was another place for worship, which when *Cain* Left he departed from the face of God (*m*). And the Church of God being afterwards continued amongst the Patriarchs, they had their particular places for worship also, though not so solemn but occasional places onely: because they was alwayes in a flitting and unconstant state, but after the Israelites came out of *Egypt* then was their places punctually determined by God himself, As.

vide Dr. Jo.
Stillingsfleet
Phecinah.

1. The

Exod. 29.
42. and 30.
36 and -
Num. 17.4.

1. The Tabernacle where the Arke of the Covenant and the Altar was placed. There God promised to meet with his people, that worshipped him; hence it was called *the Tabernacle of the Congregation, or the Tabernacle of Meeting*, as being both the place of their meeting together and Gods meeting with them. (v) Now this place was fixed as the place of Jewish meeting, as being a type of Christ our Mediator, by whom alone, we being strangers unto God, became acceptable to him; it is he that by offering himself a sacrifice to God for us, hath made him a propitious Father to us, and by whose intercession all our prayers, and service, and worship are accepted. So the Legal worship being to be performed on the altar and before the ark in the Tabernacle, it did typically teach that neither our persons, nor performances nor any worship we give God, would ever be acceptable to him, unless it be presented in and by Christ who was typed by them.

1As 7.48.

2. God commanded the Temple to be built for his publique worship, not that God would dwell in houses made with hands (v) but thus by way of condescension, he accommodated himself to his peoples capacity. That as a sovereign Monarch or Prince makes choice of some great City for his residence, so did

did the Lord of *Jerusalem*, which is called therefore the City of the great King. And as a Prince hath his palace in a great City, so would the Lord have his Temple within *Jerusalem*, which is therefore called the place of his habitation (a), The throne of his glory (b), The perfection of beauty, the joy of the whole earth (c), The place of his rest (d). Now the reason why God would have the portable Tabernacle erected by *Moses* to be changed by *Solomon*, into a most magnificent and stately Temple to be fixed at *Jerusalem*, it was to typify the heavenly Temple and Sanctuary into which Christ was to enter after his passion and resurrection, where we shall all appear before him to adore God in perfect peace for ever more. Then

a Ps. 76. 2.

b Jc. 14. 21.

c La. 2. 15.

d Ps. 132. 14.

3. There was also places for worship among the Jews besides not commanded but only approved by God, viz; Their Synagogues, and Proseuchas, and places of prayer: for though they were to have but one altar and place for sacrifice which the Lord should chuse to place the ark of his covenant there, the Tabernacle or Temple, yet had they other places for devotion and religious use. Their Synagogues was covered buildings, like our Churches, their Proseuchas were a

M

Plat

e Acts 16. 13.
f Acts 15. 21.

g Vid Diam.
b. c. on
Joh. 24.
26.

plat of ground encompassed with a wall, or other inclosures like our Courts, open above, in these they pray'd onely, in these they interpreted the Scriptures also, in the Temple they both pray'd, and interpreted, and sacrificed also: The one was without the City (e). The other was within (f) Moses having in old time in every City them that preached him, being read in the Synagogues every Sabbath day: their Proseucha's or place of prayer Mr. Aede makes as Ancient as the times of Joshua (g). But as for their Synagogues many Authors will have their Original setc'd no higher then the Babylonish Captivity, thinking that necessity first taught the Jews the use of them, which after their return they brought with them into their own Country. But Aretius and Godwin do more probably conjecture, that for as much as the Jews were peculiarly ingaged to worship God, and that there was but one Temple for the whole Nation where at the Males only were bound to appear but thrice a year; and that an hundred miles distant from them that dwelt in remote places, therefore that they might not be left wholly destitute of places for their ordinary meeting for publique worship they built these Synagogues after they came into the promised

promised Land. Sure it is they were in David's time, whence that place (b) *They have burnt up all the Synagogues of God in the Land;* and being called the Synagogues of God, we may gather thence that the Lord approved them, though he did not command them. So did our Saviour often frequenting them while he was in the flesh (i) both evidently testifying his real likeing of those publique performances of religious worship that were then celebrated, and tacitely approved the places themselves, where they were thus solemnly performed, thus you see there were these several places for publique worship under the Law. But what shall we now think of the time of the Gospel? Indeed our Saviour Christ hath removed all distinction of places through legal holiness, yet hath he still made ample provision for the authority of places for solemn assemblies for publique worship.

1. The distinction of place through legal holiness is removed by Christ. The Tabernacle and Temple had a legal holiness and ceremonial Sanctity put upon them, because of the Arkes being there (k). There and only there they was to Sacrifice, without an extraordinary warrant to the contrary. As the Hebrews say a private Altar was not lawful to be erected,

M 2

ed,

b Ps. 74. 8.

i Lu. 4. 16.
17. and 21.

k 2 Chro. 8

Exod. 24

43.

ed, but by a Prophet; and when ever they
 prayed they was either to pray in the Taberna-
 cle or Temple (*l*) or else towards the same (*m*),
 but that was for the thing typified by them,
 even Christ, through whom God accepts
 both of our persons and prayers, and all our
 performances. It is in and through his *Me-*
diation onely that we call upon God.
 Therefore he the substance being come, the
 shadowes are vanished. There is now no
 legal or ceremonial kind of holiness in any
 place however consecrated, to render any
 duties there performed more acceptable un-
 to God then if performed by the same per-
 sons in like manner in any other places.
 Divine worship under the Gospel is not
 now tyed to any one place more than o-
 ther, for any typical holiness in them. The
 whole world is Gods universal, and as it were
 Church Cathedral, and so as we may pray
 at all times (*n*). So in all places (*o*) and
 he can and will hear us from heaven his ha-
 bitation, which is constantly alike distant
 from us. That all distinction of places
 through ceremonial holiness is abolished our
 Saviour evidently teacheth in his discourse
 with the woman of *Samaria* (*p*) she asked
 him *in what place God was to be worshiped, whe-*
ther on Mount Gerizim, where the Samaritan
Temple

Ex. 25. 14.

Pl. 99. 6.

m 2 Cor. 6.

38

1 Kings 8.

44

Dan. 6. 10.

1 Thel. 4.

17.

1 Tim. 3. 8.

Joh. 4.

1. 22.

Temple was, or Mount Moriah whereon the Temple of Solomon was built: He answered her, *the hour cometh when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem worship the Father,* that is the publique worship of God should not be restrained to any place for its ceremonial holiness, as if it could render the parts of Divine service more acceptable to God, than if performed else where, for the body of ceremonial worship was now to expire, and the partition wall to be taken down and God was to be worshipped no more with Jewish ceremonies? but the Gentiles was to be admitted to be his worshippers who together with the Jewes should worship him in spirit and truth, and this the Prophet Malachy foretold (q) *from the rising of the Sun q Mal. i. ii. to the going down of the Sun,* saith the Lord, *my name is great among the Gentiles and in every place incense shall be offered in my name,* All this then shews the vanity of the Popish Pilgrimages to this or that place, as being more holy, or to pray before this or that Saint or Image, or relike, or tuteler God thereof. Since all such difference of place is abolished by Christ, So that wheresoever we be with *Jeremiah* in the Pit, or *Daniel* in the Lions denn, *Job* on the dung-hil, *Hesekiah* in his bed, the three Children in the

Furnace, *Jonah* in the Whales belly, with Christ in the Mountain, in the Desert, in the Garden, on the House top, or on the Sea shore, with *Paul* in the Prison: we may call upon God and he will hear us; thus on the one side we must hold this fast against the Papists, that all distinction of places is abolished. So that Christians may lawfully and acceptably worship God when and where their covenants direct them, Yet on the other hand be not deceived, as if there was no authority or excellency of some places for solemn Assemblies, for publique worship, still under the Gospel above others.

2. Though the ceremonial holiness, be extinct, yet are there some places holy, as separate, and dedicate from a common to holy uses, though our Temples be not, as the Temple of *Jerusalem* was, parts of our worship of God, nor types of Christ body, nor are we bound to set our faces towards them when we pray, yet is it written (1) *my house shall be called the house of prayer to all nations.* The Saints meeting and Assembling there to pray, makes it be called the house of prayer, so the Assembly Sanctifies the place, and not the place the Assembly, as the Temple did, seeing, as I said before

before we are body as well as spirit, therefore very light of Nature teacheth us, that convenient places for assembling. for publique worship, are necessary, and those places capacious for many, that must joyn therein. And although in case of Persecution of Religion the meanest place is acceptable; yet when God is pleased to give his Church Kings to be nursing fathers, to allow publique places consecrated for publique worship, with what thankfulness then should we repair to them, which many of our Christian Brethren in the world would purchase with their whole estates and dearest blood. When God give rest and quietness to his Church from the ten famous Persecutions, wherein they were glad to Assemble not in the fittest but safest places, perhaps in Dens and Caves of the earth, I say, when God gave her rest from them, then did they immediately erect Oratories for publique prayers, not sumptuous and stately, which could not then be possible by reason of the Churches poverty, nor plausible in respect to the worlds envie: but after when God was pleased to convert Kings to the Faith then was Temples and Churches presently built: and in building them no cost was spared, and nothing counted to dear

that was spent about them, Sacrilegious wretches are not in these times more desirous to pull down, than those devout professors of Christianity was to set up Churches. Thus did popular consent and the Magistrates civil Sanction design these places for publique worship, seperating them unto it and prevailing custome hath styled them Churches. Nay so did *S. Paul* himself (s) what is it then but arrant madness and sottish Ignorance; in our Quakers to boast so much of the light within them, and yet to be in such darkness? Its contrary to the very light of nature, to decry and forsake the places set a part for religious worship, the necessity whereof for publique Assemblies is so evident even by natural light. How much better did the poor Heathens improve their natural dictates, than these pretenders to the light within, who from the sight of the necessity of some convenient place for publique worship invented their Groves, and Oratories, and Temples for the service of their Idol Gods, so then from all these considerations. Gods own setting a part places for publique Assemblies, under the law, and before it his approving those that his people did set a part, the authority that such places have by the very

1 Cor II.
18. 20, 22.
and 34
compared.

very light of nature, as well as by Scripture, and the practice of the universal Church, though without placing any ceremonial holiness in them. I conclude that Divine worship may be truly Publicque which as publicque is so acceptable unto God, there is requisite as publicque persons Ministers and People to Assemble in it, so also a publicque place consecrated for the same, from which excellent consideration ascend we to an higher, which is in the very Text.

Prop. 7. The most Solemn and publicque Assemblies of the Church in these publicque places, are greatly to be esteemed and constantly to be frequented of all the faithful members of the same, in the negative (*not forsaking*) must needs be implied the affirmative to frequent them. It is a truth this, evidently following from those I have delivered. For if God is to be worshipped by all rationall beings, and that must needs be in some place in respect of our bodily parts, and that more publicque it is done the better it is, and that it be publicquely done it is necessary there be an Assembly of Minister and People, Pastor and Flock in a publicque place, then is it evidently necessary that such assemblies be frequented by all, in order to the discharge of this debt

debt of nature, the worship of God. Indeed to this we are obliged.

- I. By selfe interest, because of the great blessing we may justly look for from God, upon his Ordinances in the publique assemblies, and that more than in any private meetings whatsoever; for to the Church assemblies is that rightly applyed (t), the Lord loves the gates of Zion above all the habitations of Jacob (v). That special part of divine worship Prayer, is compared to seeking a thing lost, and knocking at a gate we desire to enter into, and sure when many seek a thing together there is more hope of their finding it; when many knock together at heaven-gates they will be sooner heard. Hence Gods people to shew an extraordinary desire to prevail with God in their prayers upon extraordinary occasions, they was wont to be extraordinary careful, that their Assemblies might be as publique as might be (w). Blow the trumpet in Zion sanctifie a Fast call a solemn Assembly (x),
- verse. 16. Gather the people, Assemble the children. As if he should say leave none out. So Jehoshaphat (y) Proclaimed a Fast throughout all Judah (z). all Judah stood before the Lord with their young ones, wives, and children, and
- a Ju. 20. 26. (a) all the children of Israel went up and all the

t Pls. 87. 2.

u Mat. 7. 7.

The whole

duty of man

w Joel. 2. 15.

x verse. 16.

y 2 Chr. 20. 3.

z verse. 13.

a Ju. 20. 26.

the People came into the house of God, when they were to fight with Benjamin and then they prevailed. For this cause also was *Hezekiah* so careful together so solemn an assembly to keep the Pasleover (b)

2. It's as necessary, this, for others good, ^{2^d Chr. 30. 2. 1.} for every man, especially Parents and Masters, frequenting the publique Assemblies, may do much good by their example. *Dauid* was much comforted in seeing the peoples forwardness in going to Gods house. (c) Multitudes doubtless go astray and forsake the holy Assemblies, by seeing others of better rank and quality doing so before them: and on the contrary many would keep close unto them, if the better sort would but more conscionably frequent them. Hence *Solomon* made his Scaffold in the Temple; even in the midst of the Court, even that all the people might see him (d), and of King *Joash* it is said, when *Athalia* came into the Temple he stood by the Pillar as the manner was (e). So it is said of *Josiah* also (f); and therefore God did require that the Prince should not onely joyn with the people in publique worship, and come in, when they come in, and go out, when they go out, but also should be in the midst of them, that they might all see him, and so take good example

^{c Ps. 122. 1.}

^{d 2 Ch. 11. 13.}

^{e 2 Kings 11}

^{24. f 2 Kings 23.}

^{2.}

2 Ps. 15. 4.
b Psal. 119.
36.

2 Ths. 2. 1.

k Psal. 1. 3.

1 Pr. 27. 17.

example by him. And as to give good example to others, so that we ourselves may partake of the fellowship and presence of Gods people that assemble there. For as every godly man loveth all such as fear God (g), and delighteth in their Company, (h) *I am a companion to all them that fear thee and keep thy Commandement.*) So doth he take most comfort in their company when they meet together in their assemblies to serve God. In the life to come, it shall be a great part of our happiness to meet together with all the faithful, and to stand in the assemblies of the righteous, as may appear by that observation of the Appostle (i). *we beseech you brethren by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him.* And by the Prophets speech (k) *sinners shall not stand in the congregation of the righteous.* And now we have some resemblance and foretast of that comfort in our meeting together with Gods people in the Church assemblies here. For by their presents and fellowship, Gods grace is both confirmed and nourished, and increased in us (l), as Iron sharpeneth Iron, so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend, hence when the Brethren met Paul at *Apri Forum*, he praised God and took courage

age. It revived his spirit to meet with
 them (m), so in respect of the example we m *Acts. 28.*
 are to give others, and that sweetness of *15.*
 having fellowship with Gods people, we
 have cause to esteem highly and frequent
 the Assemblies of the Church.

3. That tenderness that is due to Gods
 honour and glory obligeth every consciona-
 ble Christian herunto : as well as his care
 to give good example, and own his benefit.
 For the more publique the assembly is where-
 in we worship and the better it is frequent-
 ed, the more is God glorified before all
 the world. And the more solemn is the
 profession which we make of that duty and
 homage which we owe unto him : upon this
 account it is required of great ones (n) to n *Pf 19. 12.*
 worship the Lord in the Sanctuary, that so they
 might give unto the Lord the glory due unto
 his name. Hence David vowed, he would *Pf 35. 18.*
 give thanks unto the Lord in the great c ngre-
 gation, and praise him among much people.
 And Hezekiah resolved to go up to the house
 of the Lord the third day, so soon as ever
 he was recovered. (o) Indeed we cannot *2 Kin. 20. 8.*
 better professe our religion, and homage
 and obedience unto God, our love and
 thankfulness unto him for all his mercies,
 than by diligent frequenting the most solemn
 Assemblies

Assemblies of his Church; hence the Professors of the true religion are expressed by these two things, (p) *ye shall keep my Sabbaths and reverence my Sanctuary.* Nay I add

4. To frequent them is not onely our duty but priviledge also, it is one of the greatest mercies we enjoy on earth that we can have liberty to go to the house of God publicquely to Assemble in them to worship him there, and should we not then chearfully frequent them? There was nothing I am sure that *David* desired more in the time of his banishment, than this liberty, and nothing in which he rejoyced more, when he had it (q) *unicum* one thing, only one thing have I desired of the Lord, and that I shall require, even that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to visit his holy Temple.

(r) *As the Hart panteth for the rivers of water, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, even for the living God, when shall I come and appear before the presence of God!* and verse 4. *He saith that his soul languished when he considered, that had it not been for the tyranny of his enemies he might have gone with the rest of the assembly into the house of God; and (s) in a kind of abrupt affection he breaks out, O Lord of hosts how amiable are*

are thy Tabernacles, my soul languisheth, yea, and fainteth that I might come into the courts of the Lord. My heart and my flesh cries out for the living God, and verse the third he seems to envy the Sparrowes and Swallowes, that had liberty to lay their young where he had no access; and then he cries out abruptly with a wonderful pathetical exclamation, O thine altars *Jehova, my King and my God*, And in the three next verses he pronounceth them happy? not onely that dwells in the Lords house to praise him, but that hath but liberty to come to the Church, though it were with a long and tedious journey, through thick and thin, through the Valley of *Baca* the rain filling the pools. Yea, he prefers a day spent in Gods house before a thousand elsewhere, and the meanest room and most contemptible office, a door keepers place, before the highest in the tents of wickedness. *David* was deeply Sensible, you see, how great a priviledge the liberty of Gods house is. And it is observable to the same purpose, when *Hezekiah* upon his prayer had his sentence of death revoked, in what terms Gods goodness is declared, *behold I have healed thee, and the third day thou shalt go up to the house of the Lord* (t) intimating how special a favour it was that he should have health

† 2 Kings.
20. 5.

health and strength, so shortly to go to the worship of God, in the house of God: yea, the Scriptures plainly teacheth us, that though God be every where present (*u*) *do not I fill heaven and earth saith the Lord, the most high dwelleth not in Temples made with hands, he is not confined in them* (*x*): yet, is he in special sort in the congregation and Assemblies of his people. And sure that shewes it a great priviledge to be in Gods presence, as the Queen of Sheba thought Solomons servants happy that stood before him. Now Gods publique worship is called the face and presence of God. (*y*) Hence when Cain was for his murder banished from the place where his Parents and their families met together for the worship of God, as Piscator interprets the place (*z*) It is said *he went out from the presence of God. And David desired to behold in the house of the Lord, the beauty of the Lord* (*a*), and he said, *we will wait for thy loving kindness, O Lord in the midst of thy Temple* (*b*) And the place of Gods worship under the Law was called Bethel, Gods house, and the gloriouse Sanctuary (*c*), because the glory of the Lord filled it and sensibly appeared in it, in the Tabernacle (*d*) and in the Temple, and (*e*) Zion is called the habitation of Gods house; and the place where his honour dwelleth

u Jer. 23. 24
See this
largely de-
monstrated.
in Dr Stil-
lingfleets,
Sberinah
Acts 7. 48.

y Ps. 105. 4.
and 42. 28

z Gen. 4. 14.

a Ps. 27. 4.

b Ps. 48. 9.

c Ps. 26. 2.

d Ex 40. 34

e 1 Kings. 8.

12.

f Ps. 26. 8.

And Gods presence is no less in our Christian assemblies, for so runs the promise, (a) *where two or three are met together in my name there am I in the midst of them.* Hence S. John saw him walking in the midst of the seven golden Candlesticks (b). And the assemblies of Gods people under the Gospel may as well be called glorious, because the glory of the Lord appears in them also, though not so sensibly, yet no less comfortably and effectually, as is plain by that comparison the Apostle makes, between the ministry & worship of God that was under the Law; and this that is under the Gospel; preferring this for glory and excellency far above the other (c). yea, and as effects of this presence of God; O consider, what benefits are enjoyed in these assemblies, even matters of that worth that the very Angels themselves desired to stoop down to behold (d), that most comfortable and precious treasure of Gods holy word, the ministry of reconciliation, (e) the preaching of the word, which is the door of Faith, (f) that ordinance of God by which his Saints are gathered, and the body of Christ edified; (g) that powerful means by which Satan is made to fall from heaven like lightning (h), and his strongest holds are beaten down in us (i), that key of knowledge (k)

Mat. 18.

Rev. 1:13

2 Cor. 3. 8.
9. 10.

1 Pet. 1. 12

2 Cor. 5.
18.

1 Act. 14.

27.
Eph. 4. 12.

Luk. 10.

1 Cor. 10.

4.
Acts 20.
27.

N

by.

178. *The Obligation of Conscience*

by which is opened unto us the whole coun-
 /Rom. 4: sel of God (l), Those Sacraments which
 II. are seals of the righteousness which is by
 /Psal. 65. 2 Faith (m), those Monuments of Gods ex-
 ceeding love unto us in Jesus Christ,
 those seals of the kingdom, those feasts
 for our souls of fat things full of marrow,
 those exercises of common prayer and
 prailing God in their proper places, that
 house of prayer, praise, waiting for God
 /Heb. I. 14 in *Sion*. (n) O what priviledges are these!
 inestimable unutterable; had I the tongue of
 men and Angels I could not set it out suf-
 ficiently. Such cause have we to love Gods
 house, and to frequent and highly to e-
 steem the assemblies of the Saints in it and
 we are sensual, Sottish, Foolish, above mea-
 sure, if we do not frequent and esteem
 them. Nay as there is a special promise
 of Gods presence in such publick assemb-
 lies so of Gods special protection of them,
 of which the Angels are special ministers.
 For as they have a charge from God to mi-
 /Psal. 34. 7 nister and do service to Gods people (o)
 and to pitch their tents about them when
 they assemble to serve the Lord. Hence
 under the Law, the Curtains that the Ta-
 bernacles were made of was full of cheru-
 /Ex. 35. 1 bims (p) with the figures of them; the
 walls of *Solomons Temple* were carved
 round

round about. *g*, both which typified the presence & attendance of the holy Angels upon the whole Church & Body of Gods people, as at all other times and in all other places, so especially at their Church assemblies; but see a full promise of protection to them, (*r*) read it. Hence *David* gives this for one reason (*s*) why he, so highly esteemed Gods tabernacles, for saith he, *the Lord is a Sun and a Shield unto us, and (t) in time of trouble he will hide us in his Pavilion*, and in this respect they that are excluded from the Church assemblies are said to be delivered up to Satan, unto his power and will, and men plac'd under Gods, protection no longer. Therefore it concerns us to frequent the publick assemblies of Gods people, both out of self love, and for the good we may reap by others fellowship, and for others good, and for Gods glory, and for the excellency of the priviledges in having liberty of Gods house, we have all the reason in the World, to frequent, and highly to esteem them above any private meetings, that seek to overturn them, or our estimation of them. Now from all that hath been said there naturally issueth an.

Eighth Proposition which is in *Prop. 8.*

N 2

the

the very letter of my text, That it is a very sinful thing in any member of a true Church to separate from, and forsake those holy and publick Assemblies, *not forsakeing the Assembling of your selves together, as the manner of some is.* That it is sinful appears sufficiently by what is said, as it is a meanes of making the worship of God less acceptable, of giving evil examples to others, of abateing of Gods Glory, of despight or contemning so excellent a priviledge, of depriving your own soules of the fruition of Gods presence, and of so great blessings flowing from it, the word rightly taught, the Sacrament purely administrated, which should nourish and refresh your soules, and strengthen your faith, and confirm your assurance of Gods love in Christ. The Churches prayers and so of that blessing which our joynt prayers might bring down with a full measure upon us. Of the praises thereof, and so that chearfulness and reviving of spirit which we might enjoy, by having fellowship in those spiritual songs where Gods people do sing of his righteousness of all these benefits men wilfully deprive themselves, that forsake the Assembling together in Gods house. And how

however some men may foolishly imagine, that they can do well enough with the private use of the words though they injoy nor the publick, and can pray well enough by themselves though they have no society with the general and publick devotions. Yet is it sure on the contrary, that there is no such promise made to the private as to the publick. Nay, none at all to the private if the publick be neglected, or contemned. Such a woeful thing it is, for men to do themselves the greatest injury that can be, to deprive themselves of Gods presence by forsakeing the assemblies of his people; upon this ground Gods people complained of the effect of the rage and fury of their enemies; (t) *Plal. 49. 27*
They razed the sanctuary to the ground, defiled the dwelling place of Gods name, and burnt up all the Synagogues of God in the land, And *Jeremiah* in his Lamentations (u) *The waies of Zion lament, because no man cometh to the solemn feasts, all her gates are desolate.* And hence the sentence of excommunication hath ever by religious soules been accounted, the greatest of punishments, as casting them out of Gods presence and giving them up to Satan (x) so sottish are *2 Cor. 5. 9*
 they that willfully excommunicate themselves by forsakeing the assemblies. It is like

a mans being outlawed in matters of civil Government, by which he is deprived of all the benefits and protection, belonging to a subject of the realm. Just so doth this censure put them out of the priviledges of Christians and out of Gods protection for a time, so as to be reckoned as strangers or forrainers, as heathens and publicans

1. Matt. 18.
17.

(y) The sin of these men will best be discovered if we pass from this eighth proposition to the second General in the Text.

2. The Apostles taxation of some for this sin of forsaking the Assemblies, and so putting themselves in a way of apostacy, or falling back from, or wavering in the profession of the true faith; for so the Text runs, *not forsaking*

1. Cor. 16. 19.

the Assembling your selves together as the manner of some is. So then in the Apo-

1. Cor. 16. 19.

stles judgment those some, whoever they be, are blame worthy, and are to be reprov'd, and sharply rebuk'd what motives soever they may have for forsaking the publick Assemblies of the true Church, they cannot forsake them and be innocent, it is an act that cannot be acceptable unto God, *not forsaking the Assembling of your selves together, as the manner of some is.* As there are diverse per-

1. Cor. 16. 19.

sons that forsake the assemblies: So are their motives to forsake them different, some give one account thereof, and some ano-

that

ther all blame worthy. Let us but consider and weigh the Apologies and motives of some of them.

1. The manner of some is to forsake the assemblies upon pretence of some corruptions in them. It is holyness and purity these men pretend to in a high measure, and therefore they forsake our assemblies, because as they affirm, they are unholy, being mixt assemblies, consisting of both good and bad, (1) a miscel-

a vide Robinsons
and Canons
books.

2 Heb. 12.
14.

lany, Multitudes, of the seed of woman, and of the Serpent, and much more they inveigh and rail bitterly against them, and thence infer a necessity of separation from them; (2) but that this is a most corrupt, and unsound inference will appear if we consider.

2. That the purest Church on earth is not free; perfectly free from all corruptions: The spouse of Christ is comely yet black. It becomes Christs Church to be as true, so humble, far from arrogating perfection. For any Church on this side heaven to say that she is absolute, and neither wants nor abounds, were the voice of *Laodicea*; or *Tyrus* in the Prophet. As there is no Element which is not through many mixtures departed from its first

^aMat. 13.

12.

^b2Tim. 2.

20.

^cMat. 25.

31.

^dMat. 25.

^eEsai 61. 1.

simplicity, so is there no Church that breatheth in so pure an air, but it may justly complain of some thick and unwholsome evaporations, of sin and error in it. Was not the Church typed by Noahs Ark: wherein was unclean as well as clean beasts? doth not Christ compare it to a feild wherein grows both tares and wheat promiscuously until the harvest; (*a*) to a great house wherein are vessels of Gold and Silver, and of Brasse earth and clay; (*b*) to a sheep fould wherein are foulded both sheep and Goats; (*c*) to a company of Virgins all invited by an external call to the Wedding, whereof some were foolish, some wise; (*d*) to an orchard or vineyard; (*e*) wherein all are not fruitful trees that bring forth their fruit in due season. But on some God bestowes digging, and dunging unto them, and fencing them, which cumber the ground and are good for nothing but to be cast into the fire. To a vine in which are some branches that onely bear leaves of profession, or at the best but sowre grapes. Nay, sometimes in a true Church, even the chiefest members for eminency and Authority are corrupted, sometimes the prime Governours of a Church as the chief Priests and Elders in our

Savi.

Saviours time) may be great enemies of real goodness. Nay, to come closer to our selves,

2. We must acknowledge that even in our Church, and the Assemblies thereof there is such general decay of that first love, and primitive piety which consisted chiefly in Humility, Mortification, Obedience, and good works, and such a general increase of all filthy and abominable sins, and those too frequently uncensured, unreproved that there is just cause for any Godly man to fear lest God be about to take away his tabernacle from amongst us, and remove our candlestick, and go far off from our sanctuary, (f)

Ezek. 8.6.

3. It is undoubted that when a pious Christian considers these things he ought to be deeply affected with them, and neither communicate with a whole Church in any corruptions, that are evident corruptions in it, nor yet partake in the sins of any the particular members thereof: but observing his brothers prophaness, his duty is to admonish him, and to bewail his sin, and do what lies in him to bring him to a reformation thereof. This is the right course, but

4. This is no ground at all for him to separate from the Church, or to forsake the

the Assembly there of (it is of Mr. *Hilder-
shams* Doctrines, agreeable to the nineteenth
Article of the Church of *England*) and
that those Assemblies that enjoy the word
and Doctrine of Salvation though they may
have many corruptions remaining in them,
yet they are to be acknowledged true Churches
of God, and such as none of the faithful
may make separation from, because,
- 1. There was never Church on earth
free from corruption, either in the whole
or in its particular assemblies, and yet
never did the Saints of God forsake them,
upon that account. Never was there
Church from the beginning of the world,
to this day, from one side of the Earth to
another, pure in all her members. *Adam's*
house that as the first Church on earth,
yet did it contain *Cain* a bloody murderer,
as well as *Abel* a devout worshiper in it.
Presently after did God raise up *Seth* in-
stead of *Abel*, to be a holy seed unto him,
and even then did not the Church continue
long free from prophane mixtures, but the
sons of God became enamoured with the
beauty, and matched with the daughters of
men. And so the deluge came upon them.
Now from the deluge God preserved *Noah*
in the Ark; there was the Church again,
and

and behold, in that ark there was accursed *Cham* as well as a blessed *Shem*. As also in *Abrahams* family, a scoffing *Ismael* as well as a devout *Isaac*. And in *Isaacs* a prophane *Esau* as well as an holy *Jacob*; And O what Scandals brook out among the Patriarchs! *Ruben* became incestuous. *Simeon* and *Levi* brethren in evil. After this, when the Church was enlarged into great congregations, and assemblies, O what impatient murmuring do we read of among the children of *Israel*, what foul Idolatries committed in the Wilderness, what serving of *Baalim* time after time in the Land of *Canaan*, what horrible and scandalous sins were committed amongst them under the Judges? how was polygamy and unreasonable divorces, and setting up high places in the daies of the best Kings? and what a deluge of prophaneness and Idolatry must you needs think there brake out in the worst, when men did not onely sin secretly but openly? they shewed their sin as *Sodom*; when the Priests that should have restrained them, led them on by evil examples; when the more holy were as signes and proverbs of reproach, and yet in all these successive generations, we do not read of any se-
pera-

perations from, or forsaking the Church assemblies, as the manner of some now is. Its true in Idolatrous times the Saints did refuse to joyne with the ungodly in Idolatrous worship. So in *Ahabs* time there were seven thousand that had not bowed their knee to *Baal* but yet never was the wicked (until convicted and censured) debarred from joyning with the Godly in the true worship, nor was the Godly ever enjoined to separate from them for fear of defilement by them. Nay, on the contrary we shall find that when our Saviour was born, then was the Church so corrupted that the Temple was become a den of thieves, and yet then *Joseph* and *Mary* the parents of Christ did joyn themselves to the congregation in Gods publick worship? Nay they went a long journey with their child *Jesus* to satisfie the law to offer their turtle Doves and a pair of young Pigeons, and to take part with the Priests and Gods people in that which was good and for the rest they meddled no further then their places required, an Example Saith *Calvin* and *Marlorat* express against our Brownists, and all our Separatists, and Recusants, and that which may justly and finally stop their mouths
for

for ever might be this? if they would but consider how corrupt was the State of the Church in our Saviour's time, and yet how far forth our Saviour did communicate with them in the service of God not forsakeing the assemblies of the Church, though then so corrupt.

1. For the Priests and Teachers they were ignorant and unlearned; (g) Nay, ^{g Matt. 23. 16.} wicked and ungodly (h) even the High priest himself did enter unlawfully into ^{verse 3. b John 11. 44} his calling, for whereas by Gods ordinance he was to hold that once during his life, it was bought and sold and made annual, which is imply'd in that exoressi- ^{i Luke 4. 28, 29} on (i) Caiaphas was high priest for that year.

2. Most of the people in most of the places, where our Saviour conversed were notoriously and obstinately wicked. He lived most in Nazareth and see what they were there; (k) All that were in ^{k Matt. 11. 20, 21.} the Synagogue were fill'd with wrath, and rose up and thrust him out of the City, and led him to the edge of a hill to thrust him down headlong, yea and all the Cities where most of his great works had been done he upbraided, *wo to thee Corazin, wo to thee Bethsaida;* (l) nor were the people of Jerusalem better. For when Pilat a Gentile
of.

offered to release him, all the multitude crying out at once, *not him but Barabas*.
 m Luk. 23. now Barabas was a robber (m). And
 18. when Pilat washed his hands protesting for Christs innocency, they all said desperately *his blood be upon us and our children* (n), And for the worship it self, that was used in our Saviours time, it was very corrupt.

1. They then urged the use of many superstitious ceremonies, more strictly then the commandement, and ordinances of
 o Mark. 7. 9. God (o).

2. They prophaned the Temple and made it a den of thieves.

3. They abused the Discipline and censures of the Church shamefully, (p)
 p Joh. 9. 22. the Jewes decreed that if any one confessed that Jesus was the Christ, he should be excommunicated *ipso facto*.

4. Their doctrine was corrupted in many points as these of divorce, of theft, Murder, adultery (q). So corrupt was the Church then; and yet mark, our Saviour did not separate from it, but communicated with the publick assemblies in the worship of God.

I. When an infant he was circumcised, and by that Sacrament incorporated
 r Luk. 2. 21. into that Church (r).

2. When

2. When his mother was purified, he was brought to the Temple, and presented to the Lord with his offering as the custome was, (f). *Luk. 2. 22.*

3. He often heard such teachers, as taught in the Church (t)

4. He was wont every Sabbath to joyn in publick prayer, with the Congregation that were at *Nazareth* (u). *Luk. 2. 46.*
Luk. 4. 16.

5. He received the Sacrament of Baptism in a congregation of that people.

(x) When all the people were Baptized he was baptized also. *Luk. 3. 2.*

6. He communicated in the passcover with the people, and the Priest (y). *Joh. 2. 13.*

7. He allowed his Disciples to hear those teachers. (z) Nay, he commanded the Leper whom he cleansed to go and shew himself to the Priest, and offer his gift in the Temple. (a) Neither did any of the Saints in any Age, nor Christ himself, nor his Disciples separate from, nor forsake the publick assemblies of the true Church, that enjoyed the word and doctrine of Salvation for any corruptions in them. *Mat. 23. 12.*
Mat. 2.

Then these instances what can be said more convincing, if men had ears to hear, what the spirit hath recorded of the Churches. The fore quoted Mr.

Hilderham

Hildersham upon this point, hath two other reasons why we may not forsake them for their corruptions, who because he is of much authority with many dissenters, and I wish they were all of his sober spirit, therefore I will offer them to your consideration. *Valeant quantum valeant possent.* Indeed there is no cause to forsake them for their corruptions, because.

2. Notwithstanding such corruptions yet so long as God continues his word and doctrine of Salvation to a people, and in their assemblies, it is evident he dwells among them, and hath not forsaken them should men make themselves wiser or purer then God himself, to forsake those, assemblies which God hath not forsaken till God hath forsaken a Church sure no man may forsake it. So shall any man pretend to be holier and to hate corruptions more than the Lord, the holy one of *Israel*? Now you may see Gods promise to dwell among and not forsake his Church, where the word and true worship of God continues, (c) *I will set my tabernacle among you* (that is my Solemn worship whereof the tabernacle was a principal part) *and my Soul shall not abhor you, and I will walk among you, and I will be your God* and

cLeu 26.
31, 32.

and you shall be my people. In Judah is God known, his Name is great in Israel (a). ^{a Psal. 76}
in Salem is his Tabernacle and his dwelling ^{12.}
place in Sion.

But may not this Church (may some say) be guilty of such sins and corruptions as deserve that God should forsake it, and for which God in his word hath threatned that he will forsake it, although he hath hitherto dwelt therein.

Objec.

True, but that is no sufficient warrant for any to separate from it, till it undoubtedly appear that God hath indeed forsaken it, and put in execution what he hath justly threatned against it. Though adultery (either in Man or Wife) give just cause of separation, the bond of wedlock being broken by it, yet till a Bill of divorcement do pass between them, they remain still Man and Wife notwithstanding that sin. So that the woman, whom her Husband had wronged, is called his Wife. (b) Esau had justly deserved to lose the prerogative of his birth ^{b Mat. 2. 13.} right, and superiority over his Brother, when he had despised and sold it (c), and ^{c Gen. 25.} God had by his decree said of them, ^{34.} the elder shall serve the younger. (d) And Saul ^{d Gen. 25.} deserved to be deprived of his Kingdome. ^{23.}

Ans.

O

yea

e 1 Sam. 13.
14, and 15,
23, 26, 28.

f Gen. 32.

4. 5.

g 1 Sam. 24.

7. 9.

yea, God had said *that he had rejected him.* (-) yet till God saw it good to put his decree and oracle in execution, and actually to depose the one from his birth right, and the other from his Kingdome, *Jacob* acknowledged *Eſau* his Lord and Superior (f), and *David*, *Saul* (g): So though a Church may be unworthy before God of the name of Christs Church, for the many corruptions that are in it, and the Lords threatenings are gone out against it, yet till God put this threat in execution, and actually take away his Tabernacle and worship from it, it is still to be acknowledged and revered as the Church of Christ, and not to be forsaken by the members thereof.

3. Who is it that dare forsake and separate from these assemblies; where men may be assured to find and attain to salvation; *Lord to whom shall we go, thou hast the words of eternal life.* Accounting this a sufficient reason why they might not leave him (h), but men may be sure to find and attain to salvation in such assemblies, where the ministry of the word and the Doctrine of Salvation is continued and purely delivered. For the word and Doctrine of Christ is called *salvation* (i). It is the ordinary

h Joh. 6. 68.

i Heb. 2. 3.

dinary means appointed by God to bring
 men to Salvation. (k) It is the incorrupta- 1 Rom. 16.
 ble seed, at one time or other effectual in 1 Cor. 1.
 all Gods Elect that do enjoy it, (l) it is the 21. m James 1.
 ingrafted word, which is able to save our 21.
 souls. (Thus far Mr. Hildersham.) All the
 enemies of our Church cannot deny, but
 that both many have been and are still saved
 in the bosome thereof. Nor can the ma-
 lice of those *Chams* that desire to espy the
 nakedness of their Mother, and glories to
 discover them, shew one fundamental
 error with us, nor one Heresie whatsoever,
 how dare they then forsake our assemblies
 as their manner is? What though some
 others of your fellow members be guilty
 of sins and errors, is that any prejudice
 to your salvation, if you partake not with
 them, but rather reprove them, and pre-
 serve the true Faith and religion inviolate
 in your selves, although they by walking
 unworthy of their callings, and neglecting
 the conditions of the promises, do forfeit
 their part in the blessed priviledges there-
 of, and the things promised. Yet shall the
 promises be made good to you, if you be
 sound members of the Church. Nor
 shall it prove any prejudice to your salva-
 tion, that you are mixed with the wicked

in it: if you be not partakers of their
 sins. (n) *The wheat shall be gathered into the*
 n Mat. 3, 12. *Lords Garner, and the Chaff shall be cast in-*
 o Rom. 3 8. *to the fire.* Hence the Apostle, (o) What
 if some did not believe? shall their unbe-
 .10. lieff make the Faith of God of no effect;
 sure it cannot and therefore being there is
 no Church on earth free from all corrupti-
 ons; no not in its Chiefest members; being
 that Saints in their several ages did not for-
 sake the Church because of corruptions in
 them, being our Saviour hath left us his
 own practice for an incomparable example,
 being God himself forsakes not such
 Churches, and Salvation may be had in
 them, and the prophaneness of the ungod-
 ly is no prejudice to the Salvation of the
 godly members of the Church. Then
 surely it is a sin in separating from our
 Church assemblies upon the pretence of
 some Corruptions in them. Who, how-
 ever they usurp the Title of Saints and
 Godly, and Puritans, and Christ King-
 dome, and Spiritual, and the like, yet s.
 Jude (p) marks them with a black coal,
 These be they who separate themselves, saith
 he, sensual having not the spirit. Our
 Christian duty is to mourn for, and cleave
 out unto what evil we see in the
 church

is in this respect. The notes I shall give sending directly to your better information are Mr. *Hildersham's* again, who I believe gives in them the sense of all the old Nonconformists in this point, and if they be well weighed, I do believe they startle those of the Presbyterian persuasion, that separate themselves from our Church, or set up private meetings in time of public worship, and consequently in opposition to it. They are these.

Acts 14.
23.

Titus 2.
5.

1. Doubtless it is Gods own ordinance that every Pastor should have his own flock to attend upon and labour amongst them, for so it is written (f) the Apostles ordained Elders in every congregation, so speaks Paul to Titus (t) for this cause left I thee in Crete that thou shouldest ordain Elders in every City, as I had appointed thee.

2. By necessary consequence from the former, it must needs be alike the ordinance of God, that every one of Gods people should have a Pastor of his own to depend upon, & attend unto. For the duty of Pastor and People is relative and mutual, if the one be obliged by Gods ordinance to attend to a particular people, then is that particular people obliged, by the same ordinance to attend to their particular Pastor. He may discharge
this

this duty indeed, though they be so head strong as not to submit to his ministry, though they will not hear, or be warned by him as their watchman, yet may he, by a Faithful fulfilling the work that he hath recieved of the Lord, deliver his own soul: but then all this while, they by their own perverseness may lose the benefit of his ministry, and by forsaking him deprive themselves of those holy warnings, and instructions, which he, from the Lord, prepareth for them, as the straying sheep doth of that inspection, and provision which his careful shepherd would have over it, had it continued in its just bounds, so that it is every ones duty by the ordinance of God, to expect the Law at his own Pastors mouth, To depend upon his ministry, and hear what the Lord shall speak to him. Yea, he is obliged to this even in order to his own benefit.

3. It is Gods ordinance also, (because requisite by good order in the Churches, which is Gods ordinance) that Christians should be distinguished & sorted into congregations, according to their dwellings that they that dwell next together should be of the same congregation, and assembly. The general equity of these rules shewes that it is Gods ordinance.

11 I Cor. 14. 33, and 40. God is not the Author of confusion but of peace, as in all the Churches of the Saints. And

let all things be done decently and in order: the word *Parochia*, signifying parish doth evidently in its Element, denote a compass or circuit of Inhabitants dwelling next together, and so belonging to the same Congregation, this as it evidently took place for order sake amongst the Jewes, *Moses* being read to every particular Congregation, in their particular Synagogues in every Church, every Sabbath day. Acts

15. 21. So for the same same good Orders sake, which was the undoubted ordinance of God, the same is still on force under the Gospel. For St. Paul left *Titus* in *Creet* to ordain Elders in every City. So that they that lived together in the same town, was apparently to be under the charge

2 Titus 15. of the same Pastor, and Elder. (x) Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof not by constraint, &c. (y)

3 I Pet. 5. 2. Striking feet
Irenicum

4. Our Author while he with other moderate Dissenters, from the Church, have in some respects allowed mens leaving their own Pastors, to hear others better pleasing to them, yet have they so far acknowledged the evidence of the truth of these particulars shewing peoples obligation to their

their own Pastors, that they taught it thus. That men might not ordinarily or usually leave them, and when they leave them they must carefully approve their hearts to God, that they have no other ends in so doing, but their own sound edification onely, and that they go to another Pastor onely because they find, they can profit more in knowledge of Faith or Sanctification, than by their own, they complain that many Christians make choice of, and applaud, and admire some particular teachers without any judgment or discretion. That some admire another Pastor rather than their own, because he makes more ostentation of eloquence, or reading, or learning, or such like humane gifts. As the Corinthians did, preferring other teachers before St. Paul himself, because he was rude in speech. (2) 1 Cor. 11. 5, 6. And some onely leave their own Pastors to go to others for variety sake, they have itching ears, and so must have a heap of teachers (4), one teacher (let him have never such excellent gifts) cannot please them long. And some prefers others before their own Pastors, onely because they shew more seeming zeal in their voice, and gesture, and Phrase of speech, and manner of delivery, though perhaps their teaching be

be nothing so powerful, wholesome or fit to edifie their consciences, as is the Doctrine of their own Pastor. These and other particulars they complain of which shewes that people are fickle and giddy headed and leave their own Pastors for want of knowledge and judgment. So that whoever they be that leave them, must be sure to approve themselves to that God that searcheth the heart, that they do it not for any other end or upon any other account, but for better edification. Nay the Authors urge, that when a man leaves his own Pastor go to another, though he doth it in uprightness of heart, onely in a desire to edifie himself, yet must he seek to do it with his own Pastors good leave and consent, & why? It is his unquestioned duty to acknowledge that by the ordinance of God he owes duty to him as to his superior in things belonging to the soul. (b) *Know them that labour among you, and are overseers in the Lord and admonish you: and esteem them very highly in love for their work sake.* Nay, he is bound to seek his Pastors comfort and give him all good encouragement, that he may do the work of his ministry with joy & cheerfulness according to the Apostles rule. *Obeey them that have the rule over you and submit your*

1 Thel. 5. 11.

1 Heb. 13. 17.

your selves, for they watch for your souls, as they that must give an account, that they may do it with joy & not with grief for that is unprofitable for you. See here what one of the best presbyterian Guides that ever this Church had, delivereth as sound Doctrine; & oppose these particulars to Mr. Baxters late answer of Toleration not to abused: a book wherein are many strange & ill digested conceits in my poor judgment, and the pretences of other Setters up of private assemblies: and see if they can have consistence and agreement: and observe that while this Pious Author allows mens going to another Pastor than their own for better edification, yet doth he evidently understand the settled Pastor of a neighbour Church, which makes the case quite different from mens present forsaking their own Pastors, to hear unsettled, intruding preachers, who whether they be lawfully called to that holy function, I am confident thousands are utterly ignorant, nor have any good grounds to think it. So that for as much as even these sober dissenters, which did plead for, or at all allowed mens ordinary leaving their own Pastors, to go to another, have yet allowed it with such cautions as these, that men must do it for no by end, but for their
careful

better edification onely and must be very careful it be not for want of judgment in their choice, and it must be with their own Pastors consent, and as acknowledging his superiority, over them, and their obligation unto him, and as seeking his joy, and comfort, and incouragement, and for as much as this their allowance, was only with relation to settled Pastors; and if a man should not, but with such caution leave the Pastor of his own Church, to hear the Pastor of another Church, much less may he to hear an unknown, novel, corner intruder. (d) By this it appears how tender and nice a good conscience should be to do it, and what a horrible guilt of transgressing the very ordinance of God, there lyes upon the consciences of most that forsake the assemblies, out of dislike of their own Pastours, and go to others: which particulars being so clearly laid down I come to shew how groundless these mens usual complaints of their own Pastors are. And that in these following Objections.

Objct. 1. Concerning his life. It is lewd or Scandalous, so as they cannot look for benefit by his ministry.

Objct. 2. His opinion it is dangerous, so as they fear to be perverted by him.

Objct.

d vide in
Hildersham
on John 4.
32. page 342

Object. 3. His gifts they are mean, so as they cannot hope for much good by him.

Object. 4. His carriage it is indiscreet or intollerable, and not to be indured.

1. It is indeed the weightiest prejudice many have against their Pastors, so as to forsake the assembly for his sake, when they can justly pretend his life is lewd or scandalous, and would you have us then bound up to his minstry whose example is enough to undo us? must we needs hear him who hears not himself? must he guide us to heaven, who walks himself in the paths of hell? how can we credit his words who shews his own unbelief by his wicked life? who confutes his sermons, by his practices? who pulls down with his life, what he builds up with his lips? will the Spirit lodge in his lips, in whose heart he hath no room? will the holy God make use of a prophane instrument? who can gather grapes of Thorns or figs of Thistles? how can we be bound to hear him, whose life is so lewd, or if we hear him what benefit can we hope for from him?

Ans. I confess it is the most grievous complaint

complaint this, that can be if it be just
 A wicked minister being of all men
 most odious and abominable. If the salt
 hath lost its savor it is good for nothing but
 the dunghil, if the light of the world be
 darkness how great is that darkness. The
Urim and *Thummim*, Purity of Doctrine and
 exemplarity of life are the two great re-
 quisites in a Faithful minister of Christ,
 far be it from me to patronize or plead for
 any in whom there is a notorious defect of
 these, any such enemy of Christ, or Judas
 like traitor to Christ, as every scandalous
 minister is. But yet may I oppose to this
 prejudice these necessary considera-
 tions.

I. From such the purest Church
 upon earth cannot be free. And
 that,

1. By reason of that innate corruption
 that is in ministers as well as in other men.
 Alas, they are but flesh, tempered of the
 same clay with others, polluted with the
 same original corruptions, prone to the
 same vices, being Angels by office yet men
 by nature? to whom though God hath
 committed the heavenly treasure, yet are
 these but earthly vessels still, as frail and
 weak as other men. And,

2. Being as prone to sin as others, their temptations are far more then other mens. For Satan the common adversary of all souls knows his greatest advantage is in devouring those that should save mens souls. As the Syrians was commanded to fight especially against the King of *Israel*: So do the devils chiefly combate with the Priests and Prophets of *Israel*. The pulling down of these pillars is to weaken or raise the whole building, the misleading of these guides is the way to make all to err. The smiting of the shephéard is to scatter the flock, to lull a sleep these watchmen is the way to surprize the whole army. Its Satans compendious way of destruction to prevent those that should convert others, to deform those that should reform others, so that they being as weak as others, and Satan grudging no pains continually to assault them, is it any wonder if they be after foiled? from such therefore the purest Church on earth cannot be free.

2. When thy own Pastor is such, yett hast thou reason to hear him, and no reason to forsake the publick assemblies for his lewdness sake. The heathen *Seneca* could advise men *non quia loquitur, sed quid, not*
so

- so much to weigh who speaks as the matter spoken, and the Scripture warneth them not
- e Jude 16. to have mens persons in admiration, (e) nor to have the Faith of God with respect of persons. (f) Though an Angel from Heaven should bring an untruth, declare another Gospel, we ought to give no ear to him, let him be accursed (g) and though a devil from Hell should utter a truth, it is not to be rejected for his sake that speaks it. Truth is Gods where ever it grows. As a mine of God or silver is the Princes in whose ground soever it be found. It must be received for the love thereof, as truth, and for his sake who is the God of Truth, by whom soever it be spoken. Moses learnt of the Heathen, Jethro his Father in Law, a plat-form, for the ordering the magistracy of Israel, (h) Pharoah learnt of his prisoner Joseph how to prevent a famine in Egypt. (i) Naaman was instructed by his captive Damofel, where he might get his Leproulsly healed. (k) Old Eli was taught by the Child Samuel: (l) Balaam by his very Ass. It is true the liquor often tastes of the Cask, and the preachers personal looseness, may much weaken his strongest perswasions. Yet,
3. Consider by our Saviours parable,

b Exod. 4.

i Gen. 41.
41.

k 2 Kings 5.

l 1 Sam. 1.

it appears the ineffectualness of Gods word most what proceeds from the hearers own corruptions his unpreparedness, negligence, or obstinate wickedness, the fault is not so much in the seed or sower, as in the soil, the ground, that is either rocky, or thorny, or high way side; if it be Gods word it is good seed ever, and the Minister is but an Instrument, God is the principal Agent to make it fruitful. Paul plants and Apollo waters but God by his Spirit gives the increase. Now

4. Gods Spirit which breatheth where it listeth, accompanies sometimes not his holiest ministers with his saving operations, and sometimes he worketh by the lowdest of them. Thence our Saviours admonition (a) *the Scribes and Pharisees* ^{aMat. 23. 3} (those wicked hypocrites) *they sit in Moses chair, all therefore what ever they bid you observe, that observe and do, but do not after their works, for they say and do not.* If there had been no good to be reaped by them because of their personal wickedness, Christ would never have injoynd them to hear them. Had Saint Paul supposed that the Spirit of love would by no means concur with those envious ones that preached Christ, to increase his bonds,

P

he

Phil. 1. 15.
16.

he would not have rejoyced that they preached him. (b) Nay, he supposeth, that it were possible, for a very cast away to be an instrument of others salvation, when he said *I keep under my body, lest when I have preached unto others, I my-self should be a cast away*, (c)

c 1 Cor. 9.
27.

5. Consider, gifts may be where grace is not, edifying gifts for others benefits in him, who hath no sanctifying grace for his own. Judas had gifts fit for the Apostolical function; those that came to Christ could say, *Lord we have prophesied in thy name, and in thy name have cast out devils*. the Scribes and Pharises were learned men. As a lame man may with his crutch point out the right way to others, which he is not able to walk himself, and a crooked Taylor may make a suit fit for a strait body, which cannot fit himself. And as wicked Balaam could make a clear prophecy of Christ (d), so may many edifie others, that are themselves unsanctified: many have gone laden with gifts to hell, God may use his talents to convert others, that is himself a stranger to the works of grace and conversion; if man have a competency of edifying gifts, approved by the Church, and so be lawfully

d Num. 24.
17.

ly

ly called to the ministry; it concerns not us, that he want an effectual calling as a Christian: we are to look to his call as a minister, not to his call as a Christian: for should the people stand upon their Pastors inward calling to grace, they could never hear any in Faith; for how could they be ever certain of his effectual inward call, which is known to God alone; the fairest shew may be but Hypocrisy, but the Lord alone knows them that are his (e); if then thy minister be lawfully called, sent, ^{22 Tim. 2;} and ordained, thou must receive him, ^{19.} receive a Prophet in the name of a Prophet, yea, thou may warrantably hope for a blessing from him though a wicked man. Why,

6. Because Gods ordinance, and his promised blessing upon it, depends not on mans, the instruments, holyness or wickedness. The promise is suspended upon no such condition, and will you bind God, where he hath not bound himself. May not waters make a Garden fruitful lighting upon a fit soile though conveyed by a Pipe of lead or wood, which gets no good it self by all the waters it conveys; may not good seed cast into a good soil yield a good increase, though sown by unwashen hands? had *Elias* refused meat from the

Ravens mouth, might not he have justly Starved? will a noble man refuse his pardon, because a mean peasant brings it from the King? the Papists may as well suspend the benefits of the Sacrament on the worthiness or intention of the minister, as we suspend the benefit of the word on the same, yet this we hold ridiculous and impious in the one, and why not in the other? if then the purest Church cannot be wholly free from wicked Ministers, and if thy Pastor be such, yet hast thou reason to hear him: and not refuse truth from his mouth; and the fault of the words ineffectualness is most what in the soil, and the Spirit being a free agent often accompanies the lewdist Ministers, and edifying gifts may be where sanctifying grace is not; and the ordinance is not suspended on the worth of the instrument, but only on the power and goodness of God whose it is, then is this prejudice no sufficient ground for men to forsake the publick assemblies for the Pastors sake, though he be loose, or wicked in his life. In this case indeed it becomes Christians to be modest, and not to be apt to speak evil of him, as the manner is; should our tryal be at the peoples tribunal, I doubt
 very

very few Ministers would escape condemnation, but some or other fault would be found, as who is free? and that so aggravated, our moats made beams, our molehills mountains, that every one of us would find a censure severe enough, for either Lewd, or debauched, or covetuous, or contentious or Idle, there is not a Pastor in all Gods Church, but he would have somewhat found a miss in him, and he must with the Apostle expect to pass through evil as well as good reports, through hard censures, and bitter revilings in this divided and corrupted age; but you brethren, I hope you lotherwise learn Christ, do not like cursed *Cham*; uncover your fathers nakedness, do not make your Pastors fault your cup talke, or his infirmities your pastime to rip them up or blazen them, rather pity them, as being inclined to the same corruptions with others, and exposed to a thousand more temptations, and pray for him: and by no means shut your ears against Gods word in his mouth. Look upon him as an instrument only by whom the Spirit may work. *si bene vixerit proprium lucrum, si bene dixerit tuum tolle quod tuum*, saith St. *Anselm*. If he live well it is Gods work and

his gain, if he speak well it is thy advantage, take what is thine and be thankful. As for his wicked actions, those happen through the devils malice and his frailty, curse the devil but pity the sinner and pray for him, who is like to answer for it to his Judge, to stand or fall to his Master, but for his holy doctrine that is thy portion; refuse not to hear it, consider it, meditate of it, and practice it: So shall God bless it to thee, though it come from the lowdest Minister whatsoever: Else rejecting of it, thou must answer for it and be judged by it at the last day. That for the first motive, for this forsaking the assemblies, which, you see, is groundlesse, the prejudice men have to their Pastor concerning his life.

Obj. 2. Concerning his opinion. For so will some say would you have us bound to hear him who is popishly affected, or the next door, strict in the Law, too canonical, nay, we fear superstitious, and so may mix the childrens bread with poison and mislead us out of the right way; is it not dangerous to hear him.

Ans. To this I oppose these considerations, was not *Elias*, *Jeremy*, *John Baptist*, *Saint Paul*, and our blessed Saviour (who

(who spake as never man spake) accounted pestilent fellows, ring leaders of Sects, troublers of State, Deceivers of the people? how should these instances warn you of slandering your Pastor causelessly, or concluding him erroneous upon the malicious hear sayes or surmises of those that are not able to judge of the doctrine, whether it be of God or no. Yet suppose he be erroneous then must you consider of what Nature his error is, for though all truths be pretious, yet are truths of different natures, some essential fundamental points, *de Fide*, of the faith once delivered to the Saints; some circumstantial, ceremonial, indifferent; some are perspicuously revealed in the Scriptures, wherein errors are damnable, some are more darkly revealed, of which wise and holy men in all ages have doubted; now if it be onely in circumstantial and less necessary truths, wherein you dislike your Pastors opinions, then must not this difference of opinion, beget in you any heart burning, or alienation of affection, though you do *discentire*, think diversly, yet ought you not *discordare*, disagree, they that unwillingly differ in judgment, ought yet to be one in heart. The Spirit of God is promised to lead all his

chosen into all necessary truths, but not to all less essential discentions have in all ages been between great Clerks and holy Saints; contentions have even through Satans craft been cherished in the Church, they are apt to disagree on earth that shall meet in the same heaven. What remains then but that love be still kept on foot, and we all endeavour to avoid bitterness of contention about these things? to follow the truth in love. As in building *Solomons* Temple there was no noise heard of Ax or hammer (f); So in the spiritual building of the Church we should not let any sound of contention be heard among us, such is the duty of both Pastor and people; especially it is the peoples duty to be so a ware of Satans stratagems, which is to divide them from their Pastor, if it be possible, as not to entertain any needless jealousies or evil surmisings, judge cautiously of your minister, if possible, Search the Scriptures as the *Bereans* did to see if what he delivers be agreeable to Gods word, and if you find of a truth, that he and you differ in opinion in things less necessary and material, your care must be to pare the Apple and leave the worm, and that which is eaten by it, take the good and leave

f 2 Kings 6.
7.

leave the bad, which directions being sound and wholesome, if they be observed, it will naturally follow that this is no sufficient ground neither, for any to leave our Church assemblies, for any prejudice men have against their Pastors opinion.

Obj. 3. The third prejudice is against their gifts, alas will some say our Minister though he be good and orthodox, yet is he a very mean preacher: he is no Body for gifts, where such or such come in comparisons. His knowledge shallow, how can he inlighten us? he is no Orator, how can he work on our affections? or perswade us? what good can we expect from his dry, sapless, weak Sermons? or why should we be bound to hear him, when we may have better, by whom we may profit more, to this I oppose these considerations.

Ans. 1. There may be in Ministers great difference of gifts, without any in equality at all, for which the one should be preferred before the other. For he who is inferior to him thou admires, in one kind, may excell in another, perhaps in a kind more useful and beneficial. The gifts of God to his Church are dispenced in a marvellous great variety, so that there are

2i Cor. 12.
14

h i Cor. 11.

i Acts 14.
11.

k Acts 4. 36.

l Luk. 12.
17.

m Mat. 12.
20.

n Joh. 21.
15.

are scarce any two ministers but they differ in their gifts (*g*). There are diversity of gifts but the same Spirit. In the Body natural the eye seeth better, but the tongue uttereth better, if the whole body were eye what would it do for a tongue, Saint Paul had more learning and knowledge (*h*), being at *Lysra* stiled for his utterance *Mercury* or chief speaker (*i*); yet was not of that excellent presence as other Apostles were, *Barnabas* in comforting the afflicted excelled him, being therefore stiled the son of Consolation (*k*). *John Baptist* was excellent in terrifying secure sinners, (*l*) he came in the spirit and power of *Elias*, but our Saviour was milder, not breaking the bruised reed nor quenching the smoking flax (*m*). In liklyhood *Peter* did in some gifts excell the rest, to whom Christ gave in special charge to feed his Lambs (*n*). Yet in powerful reprovng of sin and denouncing Gods judgments, *James* and *John* excelled him, being therefore stiled *Boanerges*, Sons of thunder, so in the great diversity of his gifts, that is amongst ministers, yet each of them excelleth in their kind, one may have deeper matter, another a more eloquent mouth; one may be sweeter in comfort, another more power

powerful in reproof; one may be graceful in pulpit, another in private conference; one may be excellent in interpreting to increase knowledge, another in application to breed good affections in men (o). To one is given a word of wisdom by the Spirit, to another the utterance of knowledge by the same Spirit, one may excel in this gift, another in that, none in all. Now,

2. Consider this is the Lords doing, for the beauty and benefit of his Church; their different education, dilligence, or industry, is not all the cause of this diversity of gifts though it be one, Gods gift being now to be acquired in the use of these means, whence St. Pauls injunction to Timothy (p) give attendance to reading, &c. But it comes chiefly from Gods free disposition, who distributed to every man severally, as he will (q). And this

3. Makes much for Gods glory, and the benefit and beauty of his Church. For Gods glory, for the greatness of his wisdom and freedome of his grace shineth in this difference perspicuously, and for the Churches beauty and benefit: for flowers of divers bigness for colour and smell, do adorn a feild exceedingly with it's par-

ty

ty coloured coat, difference of voice, base, treble, tenor, and counter tenor, and difference of strings in an Instrument tuned by a skilful Musitian, make the musick more melodious. So is difference of gifts an ornament to Gods Church. Yea, it is suitable to the peoples disposition. For as in the use of ordinary food, all have not the same appetite, nor like the same meat; hence God hath provided variety of creatures to fit every one, such is his Infinite goodness to us; so in the Church, one people may profit most by one mans gifts, another by anothers. God hath different works, and therefore provides different workmen; nay, the same person may profit best in knowledge by one Minister, in memory by another, and in affection by another. In some audiences great and eloquent schollars are fittest, in others such as can speak to the capacity of babes and ideots. *Johns* gifts was meetest for some mens disposition, he was an austere man, and came neither eating nor drinking; our Saviours fittest for others (q). He suited himself to publicans and sinners. Nay, as this diversity may suit to different dispositions, So doth it serve to increase love and unity amongst the servants of God, as letting you see they

Mat. II. 17.
19.

they have need one of another, and so causeth them mutually to esteem each other.

The eye cannot say to the hand I have no need of thee, nor the head to the feet I have no need of you. Thus doth it tend both to Gods glory, and exceedingly to the Churches beauty and benefit.

4. Consider his ministry, whom thou accountest meanest of, is Gods ordinance, as well as others to whom in gifts he is inferior (r). *The Lord gave to one of his servants five talents, and to another but two, and to another but one, and he that had but two talents and gained other two with them, had the commendation of a good and faithful servant, as well as he that received five and gained five.* There was a great difference between *Paul* and *Timothy*, the one aged the other a youth, the one profound, famous for labours, and success in the Gospel, the other not heard of yet, yet see what *Paul* saith of him (s). *If Timothy come see he may be with you without fear,* (take heed you wrong him not, disgrace him not, see that you love and reverence him) *for he worketh the work of God, as I also do: let no man therefore despise him, Timothy was ordained a Minister and therefore they was not to despise but reverence him*

1st Cor. 12.
11.

Mat. 25. 15.

2 Cor. 6.
10, 11.

him, as if Paul himself was with them, because he was Gods ordinance, and did the work of God as well as he. Suitable is that exhortation concerning other Ministers. (r). *Have them in singular love for their works sake.* The feet of all that bring the glad tidings of peace must be beautiful in our eyes. And on the other hand the contempt done to the meanest of Gods servants, reacheth to God himself (u). *He that despiseth you despiseth me.*

1 Thes. 5.
13.

Luke. 10.
16.

5. Consider Gods word should be received not for his sake that brings it, but for his sake whose it is. Hence the Scribes and Pharisees sitting in Moses his chair, and teaching Moses his doctrine, were to be respected though they were wicked Hypocrites. Gold and Silver is not of more value, out of an imbroydered cup then a leathern purse, meat is as pleasing to the palate, as wholesome to the body, out of a clean earthen vessel, as out of a silver Platter, as a candle shines as bright in a wooden, as in a Golden candlestick: why should Gods word then, better worth than thousands of Gold and silver, be less valued, or the heavenly Manna be disrelished, or the light of our paths be obscured, by the meanness of the ministers that brings it?

Gods

Gods word is the same, of the same intrinsic worth, who ever the minister be, and so should be esteemed and received by us, who ever thy Pastor be, if he be a true minister of Christ, and have sufficient gifts, to qualifie him for the ministry, then mayest thou doubtless, profit by him, if the fault be not in thy self (x). *The manifestation of the Spirit is* ²¹Cor. 12. *given to every man to profit withal, and that ye may all prophecy one by one, that all may learn and all may be comforted (y).* The best ¹Cor. 14. *Christian that is may profit by the meanest* ^{31, 5} of Gods servants. Even Saint Paul professed that this was one cause why he so earnestly desired to come to the Romans, that he might receive some good, some increase of Faith even from them (z). And I am persuaded there is never a Minister that is ¹² ^{Rom. 1.} of the most excellent gifts (if he have a godly heart) but he can truly say that he never heard any faithful Minister in all his life, even the meanest, but he could discern some gifts in him, wanting in himself, and received some profit by him, saith Mr. Hildersham.

6. The fruit and profit, that is to be received by the ministry, depends not only or chiefly on the gifts of the Preacher but

but on the blessing of God upon his own ordinance; for Ministers are but Ministers by whom we believe, and God for his own Glory may give that blessing to the more unworthyest, he denies to the most excellent, that the glory may be intirely his own, and that his strength may the more appear in the Ministers weaknes. He sometimes causeth that which the world counts foolishness, to confound the wise, and the weaker to exceed the stronger, in efficacy and profitableness. Saint Peter did convert more at one sermon than Christ himself, probably did in all his life, who is Paul who is *Apollo*? saith the Apostle, but Ministers in whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man. *I have planted and Apollo watered. but God gave the increase.* Such is the peoples dury then to depend upon God, for his blessing in his ordinance, rather than upon the gifts of the teacher. I may allude to that (b). In

which

1 Cor. 3.
3, 6, 7, 8.

Eccl. 11. 6.

which God will be pleased to work upon thy heart. Indeed on the other hand it is not possible thou shouldst profit by thy Pastors ministrations, if thou attend not, or attend with prejudice, or without reverence unto, or delight in it, nor acknowledging Gods ordinance in it, or nor seeking Gods blessing upon it. If then there may be a great difference in Ministers gifts without inequality, if he whom thou thinkest meanest may excel in his kind, if the difference be from the Lord, and that in order to his own glory, and the Churches beauty and benefit, and the meanest be Gods ordinance as well as the best, and the word be to be esteemed for it own worth, and his sake whose it is, who ever be the minister publishing it. If thou may profit by the meanest, if the fault be not thy own, and the profit depends not on his gifts, but Gods blessing. Then though thou may rightly cover the best gifts, and bless God for them when thou enjoyest them, yet mayest thou not despise the meanest of Gods Ministers nor despair of profit by him. Nor is this then a sufficient plea for forsaking the publick assemblies, the Pastors defects in gifts.

4. The last prejudice is from his carriage

riage supposed to be indiscreet perhaps intollerable. Its true will some say our Ministers life is good, his opinions Orthodox, and his gifts excellent, but he behaves himself strangely in his place. Either he is alwayes chiding, and reproving us, A meer *Banerges*, a son of thunder, telling us oft of Hell and Damnation, as *Ahab* said of *Micaiah*, prophecying concerning him ever evil, no good. This made *Felix* distaste *St. Paul*, when he preached of temperance before him and *Drusilla*, who was most unchast, and of judgment before him an unjust judge; or perhaps he is ridged in keeping us to Church orders: he will not bear with us in what he dislikes though it were his prudence to pass by. To this loppose several considerations. I confesse there may be indiscretion in the best Pastors. Its a difficult thing both to please men in wisdom, and yet to save, and not betray their soules in faithfulness. Yet on the other hand it is ordinary for people to blame them that are faithful; for their faithfulness, under the notion of indiscretion. Remember Gods strict injunction to those watch men of *Israel*, to cry aloud and not to spare, to warn men from the Lord in every evil

vil course, and that under pain of being guilty of the blood of their souls, that miscarry by their negligence. And if you consider this, how can you wonder if they be very tender of suffering any sin to lie upon you they observe unteproved, unreformed, if they fear Gods displeasure more then mans, and take heed least that you call discretion be not nicknamed so, being in truth Laodicean Lukewarmness or want of Zeal. Do but in the next place survey the generality of people in these dayes, how dull of hearing are some, how forward and untoward others, how nicely Hipocritical and tickle others, and how secure others, and it will seem almost impossible for a faithful Pastor to work on you to reformation, unless they speak more then discretion and modesty would almost permit.

Consider also if it be not better, the people be not reprov'd and kept awake, and at last saved through the Pastors reproofs and corrections, however deemed indiscreet, then muzzled in their sins. Is it not better a wholsome though smarting plaister be laid on, where need is, than that corruption should fester? doth not more souls perish by the Ministers luke-

warne coldness then indiscretion? better are the faithful words of a friend, than the deceitful kisses of an enemy. It is blessed thunder if it do but awake men out of their sins, you are much more behold-to your Pastor for his plain dealing, and honest hearted reproofs, in faithfulness to God, and your souls, than if he should flatter you in your sins with *placencia* speaking pleasant things. All which particulars durly considered, do shew how groundless mens forsakeing the assemblies is also, because of the prejudice they too often cherish against his carriage and indiscretion. Truth is, what ever men pretend, the root of all is secret malice against the Church ministry, bread and nourished in their hearts, or at least want of love, malice cannot judge well of any thing, that comes from him a man loves not, perverts his meaning, construes wrong all his words and actions, suckes poyson from that from which a diligent Bee would draw the sweetest honey; in these dayes malice between Pastors and People flames out hot, or at least love is cold, and we know Christ bad his Apostles look for this entertainment in the world: and so we need not think it strange, concerning this fiery tryal. He

bad

bad them expect to be reviled and persecuted, and have all manner of evil spoken of them, telling them the Prophets of old had been so used before them (a). And ^{a Mat. 3. 10.} Saint Paul saith of himself and his fellows ^{12.} that they found their Masters words true by experience, for they were reviled, persecuted, defamed, accounted the filth of the world, and the off-scouring of all things (b). And when God opened to him ^{b 1 Cor. 4. 12-13.} at Ephesus a large and effectual door. That is, blest his ministry mightily, and gave it entrance into the hearts of men. Yet were there many adversaries raised up against him (c). Nay, it is made a kinde ^{c 1 Cor. 6. 9.} of marke of an unfaithful Minister not to be thus used (d). ^{d Luke. 6. 26.} *Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for so did your father of the false Prophets* (e). ^{e Gal. 1. 10.} *If I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ*, the reason is, what ever men pretend, it is a Ministers fidelity, and plainness, and boldness in reproving mens sins; that's the prime cause of their hatred and malice against them; when *Jeremy* complained every one did curse him, though he had neither lent nor borrowed upon usury, he hints the cause in the next words, that he was a man of strife and contention with

Q 3

the

f Jer. 13. 10. the whole earth (f). Ahab hated Michaiah,
 because he prophesied not good concerning
 g 1 Kings 22. him, but evil (g). The two witnesses did
 8. vex and torment men by their ministry
 h R. 11. (h). Indeed this evil made Moses, Jere-
 10. my and Jonah to find out so many excuses,
 as fearing to enter upon this so hateful,
 and thankless a calling, and it tempts ma-
 ny good Ministers either to give over the
 calling, if they can live without it, or at
 least to be unfaithful in performing it, as
 breeding them so much hatred, and dis-
 pleasure with men. I said, saith Jeremy,
 Jer. 20. 9. (i) I will not make mention of him, nor speak
 any more of his name: but his word was in my
 heart as burning fire shut up in my bones,
 and I was weary with forbearing, I could not
 stay.

Now for a remedy of this disease, on
 that people would consider, that near re-
 lation they stand in, and that dear affecti-
 on they owe to their Minister, they are their
 fathers spiritual fathers begetting them to
 Christ. Pastors, Shepherds, Watch-men,
 such as must give an account. That they
 would consider the strict command of God
 for love: hence under the Law the Priest was
 to carry in his garments the names of the
 twelve Tribes on his shoulders, to signifie
 the

the weighty burden he undertook ; and in his breast plite, to shew his entire affection unto them, and this affection it is, that maketh Ministers faithful in their office to watch over their souls unweariedly, to spend and to be spent, to win them to Christ. And so in spiritual regeneration, as in natural regeneration, it is love that begets Children unto Christ. And on the other hand the people should be as careful of love to their Ministers. Saint Paul records of the Galatians (k) *Gal. 4. 5.* That they would have pluckt out their very eyes to have given them unto him, far short of the Galatians are those that muzzle the mouths of the oxen that should tread out the corne. That abridge the hire of the labourer, and withhold the Churches right. The Galatians was willing to forsake the dearest things they had in the world, their very eyes, if not their life for the Gospel *Gal. 6. 6.* sake, and its ministry (l). *Let him that is taught in the word communicate to him that teacheth in all good things.* So I say consider what love is commanded by God from Ministers to their people, and people to their Ministers. But on the other hand see from whence all variance betwixt them comes, even from the Devils

craft, and malice, for no way hath he more effectual, to hinder the efficacy of the word then this. His five thousand years experience hath taught him that it is to little purpose to mutter a syllable directly against Gods word, he sees no likelyhood to begot in Christians, especially in Protestants, adirect hatred of the word as such. His policy then directs him to work obliquely, to distil into mens hearts a hatred of their Ministers, so to make them set at naught the word they preach. This is the devils craft. Now consider lastly how unreasonable this is, what is the matter? Is there some petty quarrel betwixt you? wipe it of, are there some occasions of disaffections? look it be not causless, as for the most part they are. Do they reprove your sins, drunkenness or sacriledge, or perjury, or rebellions, or prophanations of Gods day or the like. Alas, they would not do it but in love to your souls, they would have your good will, and gladly be beloved of you if they durst forbear, to please you, but necessity lies upon them to cry a loud and not to spare to tell *Judah* of her sins, and *Israel* of her abominations, should you not then rather love then hate them for this? and say

say let the righteous smite me and it shall be a kindness, for faithful are the wounds of a friend, but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful (m). All these considerations do bid you shake off anger, envy and despight by all means, nor to entertain the least seed thereof. No evil reports, no Idle accusations against your Pastor (n). But rather to pray for them to God, to deliver them from unreasonable men (o). And as St. Paul speaks of Epaphroditus to receive them in the Lord with all gladness, and hold such in reputation (p). Laying aside all malice and guile and evil speaking, as new born babes desire the sincere milk of the word that you may grow thereby, and then I dare say you will find no cause of forsaking the publick assemblies of the Church for your Pastors sake which was the second grand motive we propounded to consider, why men are willful to forsake our Church assemblies as the manner of some is. Besides these two grand occasions of forsaking the assemblies, there be others we need not speak so largely of, because being but named, they cannot but be abhorred, and being seen they discover their own nakedness, such are these following.

I. Some

1. Some forsake the assemblies and separate themselves from us out of mere Ignorance, taking offence at many things in our assemblies causelessly, or without any weighty reason, they do not and are not able to distinguish between the essentials and circumstantialia in Religion, and so look upon any supposed mistake in the latter, with detestation proper only to the perversion of the former, and thence violate charity, and break communion with those that hold the same faith with them. These eager Spirits having a zeal without knowledg, blow up minute differences, with lasting contentions. They raise disputes about a pin, or a nail of the Temple, that even endangers the whole fabrick, they set the same value upon the leaves and bark of the tree, as upon the fruit it self, they make ado about a nail, or tile of the house, as if it were of the same concernment with a pillar or a beam, they look upon that as simply evil, which is onely so in some respects, as it is wrong circumstantiated, or which is onely not perfect in all degrees, whereas did but men deliberately prize that which they oppose, and proportion their displeasure to the just weight thereof,

their

their contentions would soon be calmed, and never become quarrells with the Church of God. Nay indeed in many it is meer sottish Ignorance, that is the cause of their forsakeing the assemblies of the Church of God, they was never grounded in the first principles of the Oracles of God, and especialy they would never learn their obligation to the Church they was baptized in, to hold communion with it. Perhaps these men will say they would fain do right and go the right way but they would never hearken to their right guides, but gave their ears first to seducers, being a little too much affected with that shew of piety they saw in them, they put themselves wholly upon their directions and examples, and so are carried hoodwinckt or blindfold into Schisms and damnable errors. Thousands there be that have separated themselves that are meer Ignorants, silly women especially, *that was alwaies Larking but never came to the knowleg of the truth*, having better affections than principles, whom, because they would not receive the truth in the love thereof, God hath given up to strong delusions to believe lies; and so in some, thats one cause of their forsake-
ing

ing the assemblies, meer Ignorance.

2. This Ignorance is oftentimes proud or conceited. So that another cause, damnable pride. The wisest of men arraignes this vice as the ring-leader of divisions (q). *Onely by pride cometh contention.*

q Prov. 13
19.

Indeed there are few sins unto which pride is not either a parent or nurse, but above all Schism and Heresie, hath its immediate discent from it, having so many lineaments and features of this deformed mother, as sufficiently attests its ex-

See some of these heads very largely and learnedly discoursed of by the author of the whole duty of Man in the causes of the Decays of Christianity, to whom I here acknowledge my self much indebted.

traction. It is pride that makes some men dislike whatsoever is not of their own invention, or whatever is imposed by their superiours, or whatever others have a hand in whom they contain or hate, be it never so good or true, or what is contrary to that they have formerly maintained: and they are loth to deny themselves, as in effect to acknowledge they was formerly in an error, and in the wrong. Its pride that make some desire, to go in some singular way, and loath to go on in a beaten tract, wherein they may be obscured in the throng? with *Theudas* they are ambitious to be some body, with *Simon Magus* to be *μὲγας τις*. Some knowing or Zealous person, they would be taken no-

tice

tice of by their neighbours as a stricter sort of livers, and would be eminent though by the infamy of Schism or separation. To be called of men *Rabbi Rabbi*, is ins chaunting musick to any Pharisee and the very essence and constitutive parts of a Schismatick is the esteem of himself and the contempt of others. I am not as this Publican, was the Pharisees voice, whose very name signifies separation, and our modern separatists do but eccho the same note, when they pronounce these Church assemblies, and the members thereof heretical or carnal, from whom they withdraw themselves, they say as those in *Esay* Esa. 65. 5 *Stand off, come not near me, for I am holier then thou.* But let it be remembered that while the Pharisee lookt so fastidiently on the poor Publican, he renounc'd communion in prayers much more acceptable to God then his own, and the observation is truly appiyable in our case. The Transcendant purity and Sainthip and holiness, which our Separatists boasts of? being if brought to the touch but a more sublimated wickedness. And their pretence for spiritually, being onely verified in spiritual pride. By their fruit of rebellion, disobedience to, and con-

tempe

tempt of Magistracy and Ministry, rash censures, mallice, evil speakings, and bitterness, headiness, treasons, high mindedness and the like fruits, you may know them. So this pride is another partition wall that Satan useth to divide us from God and one another, and to make men forsake the Assemblies of the Church.

3. It is the manner of some also to forsake them out of curiosity, this is that baneful weed, which the diuel made shift to steal even into Paradise, which hath ever since affected the richest soils, the most pregnant understandings. I do not altogether mean that speculative curiosity about the mysterious parts of our religion, though that be a notorious mean also to propagate *Heresies*, when men will not be soberly wise, but will attempt to find out the depths of those mysteries which God hath thought fit to make secret, prying into the Ark of the secret counsells of God. But that curiosity of men which is usually about those little trifling notions, and thin aerial speculations, which do not at all tend to make men wiser to salvation. Men are not content to know those divine truths which
tend

tend to Godly practise, therefore they think such preachers as insist of them, dry and insipid, and forsake them to follow those, who will offer them nicer speculations, be they never so unprofitable to the great end of Salvation (^{vide The} ^{Decayes of} ^{Christianity} ^{in the caus-} ^{es of dis-} ^{putes.} Besides there is another curiosity that is deep in the guilt of drawing men from the Assemblies, to which they belong. A curiosity to hear strange preachers, they have itching ears: their ordinary food do not please them, a new besome sweeps clean, an uncouth bird is for their palates, a Minister of the best gifts cannot please them long, as the Athenians were all for enquiring of news, so are these men all for novelties. In a short time, they distaste the ministry of their ordinary Pastors and so to please the distempered palates of their fickle souls, they must needs be gadding abroad, to hear every upstart Mountebank that is near them, and so this is one great reason of their forsaking their ordinary assemblies, as the manner of many is.

4. Another reason hereof is covetousness and interest, the great Idol to which the world bowes, as the Apostle saith, *they that will be rich fall into divers temptations*

tations; so do they fall into this sin among the rest. Some men will be rich, therefore out of respect to their profit, they absent themselves from the Assemblies of the Church, they must needs spend some Sabbaths in going to Fairs, or going journeys, or making bargains, or meeting customers, or looking to some house business, they cannot get their living, they say, by coming to Church, and when they come they must needs leave a great part of their family behind them, for some worldly advantage or other. These are like those in Malachi (1) *That said it is in vain to serve the Lord, and what profit is it that we have kept his ordinances? And others there be in the world, that make a show of religion and piety: that have no other end in their broaching and maintaining Schisms and separations from the assemblies of the Church, then their proper advantages. They make divinity an handmaid, religion a stalking horse, to a policy. Jeroboam made the Golden Calves become more venerable Deities, when he found them fit to serve his jealousies, and Machiavels policy, that states and persons should secure themselves of religion was a common practice, long before it was a rule*

rule. In the Old Testament we read of mercenary Prophets that turned the office into a trade, that divined for money, and even for handfuls of Barley, and pieces of Bread. And in the New *St. Paul* speaks of deceivers that speak things they ought not for filthy Lucre's sake (x). *Titus. 1.* And the same Apostle declaiming against the love of money as the root of all evil; he reproves it from its having made men erre from the faith (x). And it is *St. 1 Tim. 6.* *Peter's* prediction, that the most damnable Heresies, even the denying of the Lord that bought them, should be introduced by those, who through covetousness should make Merchandize of their Profelytes (y). *2 Pet. 2.* And is it not plain how mens teaching ears in this Age, do invite many Mountebanks in Religion, to try experiments upon them, when men Nauseate Old truths; and Old teachers because they are acquainted with them, and embrace Doctrines and broachers of them because they are new, when men love such teachers and are bountiful to none but such as they love; how can it be doubted but some will suit themselves to their disciples humours to gain money to themselves, when by sowing tares, they can immediately reap

tear Gold? our age hath given us sufficient experience hereof, would God that this way of divelish traffique were at an end. And doubtless as there be many leaders, so are there many Disciples in the separation, in whom covetousness, and self interest reigns exceedingly, and by it they are animated in their obstinate continuance in their erronious waies, so as to stop their ears to the charmes of sound doctrines, charme they never so wisely. Now O that such would consider, what the character of infamy is, that remains yet upon *Achan*, that he troubled *Israel* to enrich himselfe. And on *Balaam*, that he not only loved the wayes of covetousness, but ensnared the people in uncleannesses, and upon those in the Gospel, that made Gods house a house of Merchandize, and so a den of thieves. So that another ground and reason of mens forsaking, and propagating separations from our publick assemblies. Covetousness, selfe interest. I'll name a

5. Even Idleness, and this both spiritual and natural, spiritual for because many men will take no paines in the practise of the duties of godliness which might well imploy mens whole lives; therefore they fall into nice and new opinions to im-

employ their active mindes. So spiritual Idleness in things in which they should be employed makes men curious, and curiosity contentious. The zeal of praefice of humility, and patience, and self denyal, and mortifying the flesh with the affections and lusts, and renouncing the world and the other parts of real goodness, this zeal grows cold, and so that of disputes gets and gathers heat and vigor. Alas our good works in this age fall short of the first Christians, and then no wonder that our controversies exceeds theirs; because we spend not our time in the one, which is irksome to flesh and blood, and therefore we employ it in hammering and forging the other. *Pharaoh* understood this well, though he applied it ill, when he thought the *Israelites* proposals of travelling into the wilderness to their devotions, was the effect of their idleness, and so increast their tasks as the properest way to divert their design; and as spiritual Idleness, so also natural, is often the cause of division. For as experience sheweth such men as desert or neglect their secular callings, are most apt to run after new teachers; and with the widowes that neglected their office of Ministration, to be busibodies and in many families the

she-zalots, neglecting their proper business,
 the guiding of the house, have therefore
 run into conventicles, and upon them have
 seducers acted their designs most, leading
 captive silly women to become duck coyes
 to whole families, besides these there are
 another sort of Idle persons too, that can sit
 at home, lurke by their fire sides when they
 should be in Gods house: and though they
 have little or nothing to hinder them, from
 attending his ordinance, yet any pretence,
 a shew of rain, a sore finger, an Aking
 head, a thin blast of weather will serve the
 turn to divert them. O that such would
 remember *Hezekiah's* example, who with
 in three dayes after he had been sick of
 a most painful and mortal disease went into
 the Temple (a). And the woman that
 on the sabbath resorted to the Synagogue,
 though she had a spirit of infirmity eigh-
 teen yeares (b). Alas the cause is, mens
 hearts are dead, and void of grace, and
 the love of God and his word, and so
 they find little comfort, they take no de-
 light in his publick worship, and there-
 fore are glad of an excuse. *David* loved
 Gods tabernacle well. For his heart and
 his flesh joyced for the living God (c).
 Those that tast how swete the Lord is,
 will

a Isa. 38. 22.

b Luk. 13.
10, 1.

c Psal. 84. 12

will desire the sincere milk of this word
(d). O thou that art so careless whether ^{diPet. 2, 2, 3}
ever thou appear in the assemblies of Gods
Church in this life, thou hast cause to fear
thou shalt never stand in the congregation
of the righteous in the life to come (e). ^{e Psal. 1. 5.}
Thats a fifth cause of mens forsakeing or
absenting from the assemblies as the man-
ner of many, is,

6. There is a sixth which I will name
because I will miss none, and but name it,
because I have spoken in effect to it before.
The manner of some is to forsake them, up-
on pretence, they can spend their time
and serve God as well, pray and read
good books at home as in the Church
of God. But God loves the gates of Si-
on more then all the dwellings of Jacob
(f). David sure being both a prophet and ^{f Psal. 87.}
a King could serve God as well in private
as any pretenders, and he had both a pro-
phet and a Priest with him in his ban-
ishment yet did he for all that long
for the publick worship of God; bewailed
the want of it exceedingly (g).

But I have fully shown you before the ^{g Psal 84.}
excellency and acceptableness of publick
worship performed by Godly ministers to-
gether with his people in a publick place,

above any private whatsoever, that's a sufficient consideration to convince them of sin, that forsake the assemblies upon this account, as the manner of some is.

Thus have I now both discovered the evident duty of all Christians, and their obligation to frequent the publick assemblies in order to the publick worship of God, and the sin of those men, that either upon pretence of corruptions in the Church, though they acknowledge it Orthodox, and right in the substantials of religion, or of some faults in the ministers life, or opinion, or gifts, or carriage, but in truth out of malice or hatred against him, or out of pride, or curiosity, or Idleness or upon pretence they can as well serve God at home, do neglect or forsake the publique assemblies. Now what remains but a word of exhortation, to all that have an ear to hear what Gods Spirit saith unto the Churches, and members of them.

I. I beseech you Beloved in the Lord, to learn to lay to heart your obligation to attend upon Church Assemblies: and beware of those that endeavour the divisions of the Church, or to divide and separate you from it. It's the Apostles own earnest

exhortation, (g) now I beseech you brethren Rom. 16
 mark them which cause divisions and offences, 17.
 contrary to the Doctrine which you have learned,
 and avoid them. They are no lovers of
 your souls as they pretend, they are no ser-
 vants of God for your good, they are no fit
 guides for salvation, that for things meerly
 external, adiaphorous, & indifferent, matters
 of meet order or decency, separate them-
 selves from the society of a true Church,
 and would have you so to do. As if a furi-
 ous brainfick sailor should upon every occa-
 sion of anger or discontent, cast himself o-
 verboard, presuming to be safe enough out
 of the ship; the ordinary road way of Gods
 saving any soul is in the unity of the Church.
 And that is in a conjunction of them to some
 visible ordinary congregation according to
 that, (h) the Lord added to the Church such as 1 Cor. 2.47.
 should be saved, but excruciate not, they who
 go out from amongst us, because they was
 never of us, as to their hearts, I will not pre-
 sume to judge them as to their final state, yet
 this I le say, that the Church being the
 Spouse of Christ, and Schism and Heresie
 being a work of the Flesh, an effect of so bad
 causes as I have shown you fully, ranked by
 the Apostle with fornication, and drunken-
 ness, and adultery, and the like. I would

not dye in their state for all the world; take heed hereof. then I beseech you.

2. But for Church Assemblies, I beseech you labour to love them and delight in them and be more thankful to God, for the liberty you have to frequent and enjoy them, than hitherto you have been. Consider the cloud of witnesses that is gone before you.

i Triv. 2.
20.

(i) Walk in the way of good men, and keep the way of the righteous. They have ever highly esteemed and diligently frequented the Assemblies of the Church. Christs Parents being poor dwelt far off *Jerusalem*, yet did they go up every year to the passeover, which was the most solemn Church Assembly, that Gods people in those dayes had. Behold a witness against them that pretend poverty for their excuse. The Apostles after Christs ascension were continually in the the Temple (k). And *Anna* the Prophetess,

k Luke 24.
53.

l Luk. 2. 37.

departed not from the Temple but served God, with prayers and fasting night and day (l). And the Primitive Christians continued dayly with one accord in Temple

m Acts 2.
46.

n Luke 4.
16.

o Joh. 2. 13.

(m). Yea, our blessed Saviours custome was to the Synagogue every Sabbath day (n). And did constantly go to every passeover at *Jerusalem* (o). behold what witnesses you have against those that pretend they have knowledge

knowledge and grace enough, they have no need to go to Church, they cannot profit by it, but can as well serve God at home. *Hezekiah* the King you see resolved so soon as ever he recovered to go up to the House of God (p). *David* loved the habitation of Gods house, and the place where his house dwelt (q). He counted Gods Tabernacles amiable, his soul longed, nay fainted for them (r). He made it his choice to be a constant companion of them that feared God (s). He was glad when they said unto him let us go up to the House of God. Behold what witnesses you have also against those, that being great and rich, take state upon them, and think it a kind of debasement to be constant in attending Gods house and service. Let us in the fear of God follow these excellent examples, and of whatever degree we be, poor or rich, wise or learned, let us never forsake the Assemblies, or neglect them. If we do, we may easily provoke God to give up to our own hearts lusts, or to hardness of Heart in sin, or to the delusion of Satan to believe his lies. And therefore let us prize the having opportunities of attending Gods house. Let us count it one of the greatest blessings that our candlestick is not removed, nor

Isai. 38.

32.

Psal. 26. 8.

Psal. 84.

12.

Psal. 119.

63.

2. Thim. 1.

3.

2. Cor. 13. 9.

3.

2. Cor. 13. 9.

3.

2. Cor. 13. 9.

3.

is there a famine of the word in our daies, not is it persecuted, but that we may securely and openly worship God in our Churches, and Temples, and not, as our miserable fore fathers, be glad to do it in hills and holes, in Dens and Caves of the earth. Let us labour to walke worthily of this blessing while we enjoy it; and to benefit by it, lest we provoke God continually till he be weary of long suffering: and so he at length destroy his Tabernacle, as a garden, and lay waste our congregations (c). Let it be our daily prayer for the continuance of our solemn assemblies, both here and in all places of our divided land (d). pray for the peace of Jerusalem, *They shall prosper that love thee*. Thus let us do, every one, our selves.

1 Lam. 2.
6.

2 Psal. 122.
6.

3. Nay, let us, according to the latter part of the verse, wherein our text is. Let us exhort one another hereunto; let every one call upon his neighbors, and friends, and draw them to frequent the Church assemblies when the Lord had prophesied, (x) *That in the dayes of the Gospel, all nations should flow unto the house of the Lord*, he addeth (y) that by this means it should be done. Many people shall

2 Esa. 2.2.

1 ver. 3.

shall go and say: come let us go up to the house of God. Especially let Masters of Families, and Parents be exhorted, not to think it sufficient to come to Gods house themselves, but see that their Children and servants come also. A Godly Christian cannot be content, that they should attend him in his house, that will not attend and go with him to Gods house (3). ^{Exod. 20. 10.} you see the commandement runs that we do not onely keep the Sabbath our selves but must look that our Sons, and our Daughters, our men servants, and our maidservants, and strangers do the same. ^{1st Cor. 14. 24.} And Joshuahs piety runs thus. (a) *And my house will serve the Lord.* And David ^{15.} saith expresse (b), *where shall no deceitful person dwell in my house;* no prophane contentment of religion. And (c) ^{Psal. 42.} he speaks of this as one of the greatest comforts he had on earth, *that he went with a multitude of them that kept holy day, and led them into the house of the Lord.* This if we do not, if we walk not after these excellent patterns and examples, if we do not with cheerfulness go into the Lords Courts, and serve the Lord with gladness, and come before him with joyfulness; if we do not account our dayes and hours pretious that are so
be

bestowed, if we be not forward to take all holy opportunities, redeeming our time from the world, that we may spend them in these assemblies of Gods people, if we have neither delight nor appetite to the words and Sacraments, or the duties of praise and invocation, if we be dull or lumpish, heavy and spiritless in them, if we be not much agrieved to see or hear of the congregations being unfrequented or neglected, and glad to see, and quick to promote the frequency and fulness thereof. It is because we do not understand our own happiness in enjoying the benefit of them, As Christ said to the woman of *Samaritan*, we do not know the gift of God (d). We are foolish and insensible of the greatness of that privilege we may have in waiting upon the assemblies. And therefore we are so prone to forsake the assembling of our selves together, as the manner of many is. From which grievous sin God of his infinite mercy preserve us, making us evermore to delight in his house and presence. For Jesus Christ his sake to whom with the father, and the Holy Ghost be ascribed all honour and glory, might, majesty, and dominion, now, and for ever more. Amen.

F I N I S,

